

SHIPS ACROSS THE SEA



RALPH D. PAINE



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SHIPS ACROSS THE SEA



THE WEAPON BOUNCED FROM THE SKULL OF THE TOUGHENED
WARRIOR (page 134)

SHIPS ACROSS THE SEA

Stories of the American Navy
in the Great War

By RALPH D. PAINE

With Illustrations



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CONTENTS

THE ORPHAN AND THE BATTLE-WAGON	1
TEN FATHOMS DOWN	33
TOO SCARED TO RUN	63
THE QUIET LIFE	95
ON A LEE SHORE	127
THE NET RESULT	158
THE LAST SHOT	189
THE SILENT SERVICE	227
THE RED SECTOR	283

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE WEAPON BOUNCED FROM THE SKULL OF THE TOUGHENED WARRIOR	<i>Frontispiece</i>
WHEN DAYLIGHT BROKE, THE GALE THAT LASHED THE NORTH SEA WAS TEMPESTUOUS	26
JERRY DRIFTED SO CLOSE ALONGSIDE, HOWEVER, THAT THE SIGNS OF LIFE WERE UNMISTAKABLE	80
IT SEEMED ALMOST TO STAND ON END	218

Drawn by Stanley Rogers

SHIPS ACROSS THE SEA

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THE ORPHAN AND THE BATTLE-WAGON

IN time of war the Navy shows a sly dislike of publicity and its operations are mostly "hush stuff." This was why a division of American battleships said nothing about it at home when they rolled out into the winter gales of the Atlantic and presently loomed through the mists of the North Sea. The Grand Fleet welcomed them as comrades in the long and weary task of holding safe in check the sullen German squadrons which had ceased to brag of "*Der Tag*." Splendidly powerful, the big ships dropped anchor in the Firth of Forth and the starry ensign flamed against the bleak hills of Scotland.

They had been battered and swept by wicked weather and the voyage was a tale of flooded decks and splintered boats, of incessant toil and discomfort. Now came a brief respite before steaming farther north to begin their vigil amid the lonely Orkney Islands. Several thousand American sailors were aware of the fact that the Christmas season was close at hand, which made their exile seem the more remote. There was a sentimental eagerness for shore liberty in Edinburgh, not to get drunk, but to squander their pay on souvenir gifts for the folks at home.

Among the twelve hundred men aboard the flagship you could have found no more ardent champion of the holiday spirit than Henry Turnbull, boatswain's mate, who was commonly called "Bugs." This surging enthusiasm was illogical and unexpected. It perplexed all hands. He was a slow, stubborn person of few words and fewer friends, mild-mannered enough unless goaded too far, when the raw-boned frame and hairy fists were a persuasive argument. When off duty he was usually reading some book from the ship's library or picked up in a second-hand shop, scowling at the pages with earnest interest and muttering the words aloud.

His faithful chum, his right bower, was unlike him, of course. The peppery, quick-witted Jim Cooney was all that a petty officer ought to be — a brisk little man with a blue eye that bored like a gimlet. When he rasped out a command there was no dilly-dallying. He bullied "Bugs" Turnbull outrageously, and their quarrels diverted the gun deck, but they had been inseparable through two enlistments.

These two were standing together in the lee of a turret while the liberty parties swarmed down into the string of sailing cutters, and the launches towed them toward the landing pier at Rosyth. The hundreds of bluejackets were in high spirits at this release from long confinement within steel walls and Henry Turnbull, boatswain's mate, gazed after them, so much melancholy written upon his homely lineaments that Jim Cooney exclaimed:

"Cry, why don't you? Lay your head on my

shoulder and weep it out, you big turnip! You 're due to hit the beach to-morrow. What's eating you? Honest, if I had your disposition I'd blow out my brains."

"It's this Christmas stuff, Jim," was the wistful reply. "I'm all worked up about it. You see, I want to get ashore so I can buy a Santa Claus outfit — white whiskers and all the gadgets — sleigh-bells and tricks for a tree, and colored paper to fake up a fireplace with stockings hangin' in it."

"Read it in a book, did you, Bugs?"

"Maybe. I don't know when I've been so excited over anything. I figure on playing Santa Claus, and you can bet it'll make our bunch of hard-shells feel like innocent boys again."

Jim Cooney, gunner's mate, shook his head in mock sorrow, and said with a laugh:

"It would take more than that to sweeten the bunch of young thugs in your division, Bugs, my lad. If you're so anxious to make a real hit on Christmas Eve, why don't you drop down inside a funnel and pop out of a furnace door? On the level, you ought to lay off reading books. Your mind is n't strong enough to digest 'em. A month or so ago you were tryin' to convince me that the world is flat."

"They were powerful arguments, Jim. I got all stirred up about it. I can't help feeling that she really is flat."

"Then how in hell did you go round the world with the battleship fleet in the old *Michigan* without sailin' plumb over the edge?"

"I forget the answer to that," confessed the boatswain's mate; "but what has it got to do with celebratin' Christmas?"

"You can search me, unless it's because you get afflicted with one bug after another. You are all theory. That's what ails you. Here I am, with a wife and two kids in Jersey City, and they don't even know where I am. I could n't even slip 'em word that this blistered old battle-wagon had decided to poke her nose into the war. *I'm* the bird that ought to be boiling over with all these Christmas emotions. Where do you head in, with no kin on earth closer than a step-uncle, and home is wherever you sling a hammock?"

"It was poetry that I read last," patiently explained Henry Turnbull. "Poetry has a kick to it. And this particular book got under my shirt."

"Like a case of measles," grumbled the gunner's mate. "The men tell me you're a Christmas nuisance. Nobody ever dreamed you'd behave this way and they can't understand it."

"Anxious to make others happy, do you mean, Jim? It's my duty. The poet says so. And if you try to stop me from being happy and kind, I'll bust you one on the jaw."

"Make one swing, you mush-head, and you'll be the sickest Santa Claus that was ever rammed into an ambulance instead of a chimney," was the fiery retort of the little gunner's mate as he stood poised upon his toes.

The trill of a boatswain's pipe summoned them

to duty and the crisis was averted. Amiably enough they went off together next day in a liberty boat and were permitted to ramble through the storied streets of Edinburgh. The war had not exhausted the stocks of Scotch whiskey, and there was no law against drinking in uniform, but this pair of blue-jackets tarried briefly in a pub, merely to wash down the dust. Cooney might have lingered a bit longer, but his tall comrade had business more urgent. They wandered on arm in arm, Cooney in an insulting mood and protesting that he was being kidnaped.

They halted in front of a toy shop whose window display was pitifully meager, but Henry Turnbull beamed with joy and waved a hand at the rosy effigy of Santa Claus which seemed to smile back at him. He surged inside, dragging his reluctant partner, and the lass behind the counter greeted them with a pretty reference to hands across the sea. It was a sair shame, said she, that the censor would not let the people of England know about the braw, great battleships and grand sailors that had come over from America to help smash the Hun. Henry Turnbull blushed and began to make his purchases on a reckless scale. Cooney became absorbed in trying to play "Annie Laurie" on a tin whistle.

He stopped on a high note, jumped to his feet, and stood in an attitude of frozen attention as a broad-shouldered, elderly naval officer entered the shop. His massive, wind-reddened face wore a genial expression. The stars on the collar of his blouse indicated his rank as that of an American rear admiral, and

as he returned the salute of the startled gunner's mate, the latter whispered in a swift aside:

"Snap it out, Bugs, you boob! Here's the main guy. Where's your manners?"

Henry whirled at the warning and his hand flew to his cap. The admiral noted that the two petty officers came from his flagship and also that he had interrupted a shopping tour. The Christmas spirit warmed his smile and also betrayed itself in his chuckle as he exclaimed:

"You beat me to it, boys! Anything left, or have you made a clean sweep?"

"I'm afraid you will have to dicker with this buddy of mine if I leave him here any longer, sir," answered Jim Cooney, indicating the prodigal Henry. "As Santa Claus he just naturally aims to be the whole works. It's his failing."

The admiral appeared alarmed at this, and ambled to the counter to inspect the operations of the abashed Henry, who courteously stammered:

"If you want any of this plunder, sir, please go as far as you like. Cooney and I will cruise up the street and look for another store."

"No use," replied the admiral. "I have tried them all. I can't find toys enough to go round, but I did hope to get a Santa Claus outfit and some gewgaws for a tree."

"I just bought the last lot of 'em, all complete," eagerly cried Henry Turnbull, "but I hereby waive my claim. Wade in and help yourself, if you please, sir."

His unselfishness was heroic, but there was healing balm in the thought that he had been vindicated in the sight of the cynical Jim Cooney. If a rear admiral desired to play Santa Claus, the pastime was certainly worthy and proper for an enlisted man. Cooney snickered and meekly raised his hands in token of surrender.

The admiral rubbed his double chin in a thoughtful manner and his eyes twinkled as he said to Henry:

"Tell me more about it. Did n't I hear some of the men riding you a bit aboard-ship — about your violent explosion of Christmas spirit?"

"He was taken acute with it several days ago, sir —" interjected Cooney, with a grin.

"Shut up, you pest!" snarled Henry, who went on to say in milder tones, "I got filled up chock-ablock with poetry, sir, and we're a long way from home and fireside and all that we hold dear — and you know how it is, a man gets sick of chewin' over the war all the time — and I decided to shoot a little Christmas cheer into the old battle-wagon."

"Yes, I think I know how it is," said the admiral, and his voice was a shade pensive. "I have a notion that we can adjust this difficulty to our mutual satisfaction. I was planning to play the rôle of Santa Claus myself, but you deserve to have the billet. You are the real thing, and, besides, I am really too rheumatic to slide down a chimney. Can you two men keep a secret? Of course you can. I'll tell you right now, but you must not pipe a word between decks until I pass you the word."

Jim Cooney's eyes bulged and he fidgeted with excitement. Sharing secrets with the admiral was not an every-day event. Henry Turnbull took it more calmly. They crossed their hearts and hoped to die, whereupon the admiral drew them into a corner of the shop and unfolded the conspiracy. Then with a cordial nod of farewell he trundled into the street and went to rejoin his stately column of Yankee fighting ships. By tacit agreement the two sailor-men drifted into a tidy pub near by to have just one and discuss the sensational episode.

"I get my rating as Santa Claus and it's official, you mean-tempered little squib!" ejaculated Henry, and his demeanor was loftily patronizing. "All the gobs that called me a nuisance ought to apologize, had n't they?"

"You will get none from me, Bugs. This will make you a bigger nuisance than ever — all swelled up and foolish — chatterin' about your dear old pal, the admiral."

"Him and I do seem sort of congenial," admitted Henry. "Now about this Christmas party of his — he don't want us to spill the news until he is sure he can pull it off."

"The stunt listens all right," replied Cooney. "He is sure a good old scout. Here's to him, and a bloody fleet action before we fly the homeward-bound pennant. He'll be there."

It was announced from the admiral's cabin, two days later, that the war orphans of Edinburgh would be invited to a Christmas dinner and entertainment

on board the flagship. It was suggested that the officers and men might be glad to raise a fund for expenses, and the subscription lists were open. Were they eager and willing? It was a happy inspiration. Homesickness was banished. They crowded to the pay office and fairly flung their money at the yeomen detailed to handle the fund. The other ships of the division heard the news and begged that they might be allowed some orphans of their own. It was unfair for the flagship to monopolize the fun. The admiral was compelled to promise them each a consignment of kiddies to play with.

"You have undoubtedly started something, sir," said his chief-of-staff at breakfast.

"It seems to have scored a bull's-eye," was the jocund response. "The idea occurred to me when I dined in the *Queen Elizabeth* the other night. Beatty said that his battle-cruisers were planning to do something of the sort for the British sailors' orphans — Jutland accounted for a lot of them about here — and I persuaded him to let me give the show."

"And you concluded to capture all the blessed orphans you could lay your hands on, soldiers' boys and girls as well?"

"Why not? It is a privilege, confound it! That's what I told Beatty. We were asking a favor of him. We can take care of a thousand orphans, and if more of 'em come they won't be neglected. I can't find enough toys, and the stuff they sell for candy is pitiful, but there is more than one way to skin a cat. How is the fund? Still rolling up?"

"Like a snowball," replied the chief-of-staff. "This ship will do better than four thousand dollars."

"Splendid! You had better come ashore with me this morning. I shall need a purchasing agent."

When Christmas morning came, there was gray sky overhead and a misty drizzle blew from the North Sea, but the boys and girls of Edinburgh were accustomed to damp weather and the noisy battalions of orphans were undismayed. They were mustered at the landing-pier by chief petty officers, who almost lost their wits before the last boat was filled and the flotilla moved out to the anchored battleships. The admiral watched his guests come streaming up the gangway, and it must be confessed that he blew his nose with more vehemence than seemed necessary. His emotions were profoundly stirred. He was vouchsafed an intimate glimpse of what the war had meant to the indomitable people of the British Isles.

These children of Scottish fathers who had died by sea and land knew what it was to feel the pinch of frugal rations and poor clothing. They had been cared for as tenderly and generously as possible, but, alas, there was no end to the calls for aid and the food supply was very limited. Neat and clean and scrubbed until their cheeks shone like red apples, they swarmed over the flagship in charge of their American sailor friends who tried to answer a dozen shrill questions at once.

Between decks, where a thousand men had their living quarters, the beams and stanchions were festooned with greenery or gay with bunting. Even

the gleaming breech-blocks of the five-inch rifles were hung with wreaths of holly. Most entrancing of all was a huge fireplace built of red brick, or what resembled it, and a chimney which rose to the deck above and cleverly fitted into a ventilator. The fireplace was flanked by Christmas trees, the branches flecked with snow and sparkling with tiny colored lights. It was not easy to realize that elsewhere in this grim, gray citadel of a battleship the engineers and stokers watched the pressure gauges, signal-men stood vigilant for the word, and that at two hours' steaming notice the Grand Fleet was ready to move at full speed in search of the enemy.

Precisely on the moment a bugle sounded the call for dinner and the hundreds of lads and lassies were conveyed to the long mess tables where the bluejackets served as waiters. Now it must be remembered that these urchins had not seen a slice of white bread in years; that butter was almost unknown to them; and as for roast turkey and cranberry sauce, and peas, and mince pie and ice cream, the feast was simply incredible. They could not believe their eyes. When the chaplain said grace, they devoutly bobbed their heads and the clamor was hushed. Then they proceeded to show the wondering sailor-men how much an Edinburgh orphan could hold without bursting. The admiral surveyed one table after another and laughed until his face was redder than ever. The flagship band quite played itself out of breath, and between bites the children

shouted the chorus of "Pack up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag."

Henry Turnbull, boatswain's mate, had shepherded his squad of orphans to the table and was now engaged in trying to keep pace with their appetites. Near by was that nimble petty officer, Jim Cooney, who balanced a laden tray like a juggler and was in several places at once. Sad it is to recount, but there was discord between these two shipmates and the holiday spirit had been jarred by angry words. The innocent cause of this painful dissension was a yellow-haired tot of an orphan lass whose years were seven or eight. At first acquaintance Henry Turnbull had noticed her as winsome beyond the others, and the admiration appeared to be mutual, for she had slipped her hand in his big paw as they strolled about the ship. Responsive to his sympathy, she told him about the fayther that had ganged awa' to France with the Cameron Highlanders and would come home no more, and the bonny, bonny mither who had died because her heart was broken.

"You are out of luck, Mary MacDonald," said Henry, patting her soft cheek. "It don't seem right for you to be turned adrift in an orphanage. A Highland rosebud like you ought to grow up in the country, on a farm or something."

"It was a wee bit farm we lived on!" cried Mary, with a gush of happy memory. "I minded the sheep, and once I fell in the burn and mither put me to bed."

"Mine used to wallop me if I went near the canal. That was in Passaic, New Jersey," confided Henry. "I was a regular young wharf rat."

They had been getting on famously when Jim Cooney joined the party, and he, too, fell a victim to the fascinations of small Mary MacDonald. Impartially she smiled on him and giggled at his jests, for he far outshone poor Henry as a comedian. He could imitate a slide trombone and walk on his hands and wiggle his ears, which achievements so enraptured the fair but fickle Mary that she shifted her attention, and Henry felt the twinges of jealousy. While they were assembling the guests at dinner, he found occasion to say:

"That's my orphan, Jim. Get me? I saw her first. You go get you another one. With five hundred to pick from, what do you mean by butting in on me?"

"She got tired of your ugly face, Bugs," snapped the cruel gunner's mate. "These unfortunate youngsters need something merry and bright to look at. Is it fair to add to their afflictions?"

"I took a mighty strong fancy to this beautiful little Mary MacDonald," was Henry's dogged reply. "She reminds me of a girl I knew one time — a girl that threw me down. If we had got married and had a little girl she would ha' looked just like this Mary."

"Not if she took after her dad, she would n't," was Cooney's coarse rejoinder. "Don't be foolish, Henry, and put a crimp in this Christmas celebration. My wife has been dyin' to adopt a little girl. Our kids are both boys. I've been hunting all over every-

wheres, and Mary is the first one I've glimmed that fits the specifications to a dot."

"But I have an idea of actin' as a sort of guardeen to her, Jim, and finding a good woman to bring her up all ship-shape. You see, if that girl in Passaic had n't given me the hook —"

"And if you had any brains you might be an admiral," scoffed Cooney.

"You leave my orphan be or there'll be real trouble between us," was the angry ultimatum of Henry.

This may explain why at dinner wee Miss Mary MacDonald received the flattering attentions of two petty officers who hastened to anticipate her smallest desire. She thanked them both with the courtesy of a princess, but it was obvious that her favor inclined toward the sprightly Cooney of the droll yarns and the dancing eye and the sly imitations of the admiral's deep and awful voice. Henry Turnbull appeared disconsolate, but he brightened toward the end of the dinner, for the climax of the festivities was at hand and he would be the star performer as Santa Claus.

Reluctantly the orphans wriggled from off the benches, the buttons almost popping from their clothes while they languishingly eyed the ice cream saucers and wondered if they could not have managed to stow a few more spoonfuls beneath their little jackets. Squads of sailors had been swiftly piling packages near the Christmas trees, mountains of them, enough to make a cargo for a coasting

smack. The men were tottering in under the burden of more bundles while the glee club of the flagship sang some old songs that everybody knew, and then it was rumored that Saint Nicholas himself was about to appear.

There were squeals of excitement and all eyes became focused upon the fireplace. Henry Turnbull had rehearsed his part, but not in costume, which made him bulkier, and three helpings of turkey may have expanded him a bit. At any rate, he found it difficult to insert himself into the ventilator and the eager orphans heard his muffled grunts as he squirmed and twisted. The chimney was even a tighter fit, to judge by the sounds which conveyed extreme annoyance and shortness of breath. The admiral appeared anxious and moved nearer the fireplace. The language of Santa Claus had become so emphatic that the admiral sent word to the glee club to strike up something and smother the confounded racket in the chimney.

With presence of mind a brawny quartermaster crawled into the fireplace and peered up the chimney. One of Henry's boots dangled within his reach and he clutched it with a stentorian shout of:

"Heave and haul away, my hearties! We can always pull ourselves out of a hole in this man's navy."

Santa Claus let go all standing, as the saying is, and came down upon the quartermaster's head like a pile-driver. It was a novel entrance and aroused the orphans to wild applause. When the jolly old

saint had disentangled himself, however, and was right side up, it was discovered that he had suffered damage. His white whiskers were tucked under one ear, a scratch ran the length of his nose, the crimson doublet was split up the back, and his countenance was not radiating the good-humor expected of it. The orphans loved him no less. In fact, they had a taste for comedy, and this was like a Charlie Chaplin movie.

Henry Turnbull failed to share their merriment. He was filled with anger and chagrin because he had made a lamentable mess of it in the presence of the admiral, who had officially appointed him to the billet. Pulling his whiskers straight, he shouted a greeting to his little friends and began to reel off the jests which he had so painstakingly learned by heart. His task was to act as master of ceremonies while the sailors distributed the parcels, but his mind wandered, and he kept one eye on a wicked gunner's mate, Jim Cooney, who sat with pretty Mary MacDonald perched upon his knee.

It was the faithless Cooney who had most loudly gayed the unlucky Santa Claus when he tumbled down the chimney. Henry knew that voice and the strident "haw-haw" of a laugh that sounded like the bray of a jackass. Worse than this, Cooney was inciting wee Mary to merriment, trying to make Henry ridiculous in the sight of his own orphan. It was raw, bitterly reflected Henry, and not even the benevolent soul of a Santa Claus could be expected to stand for it. Unless Jim Cooney squared himself,

he was liable to have the Christmas spirit punched clean out of him.

The sagacious admiral knew what sort of gifts would do the most good, and with several thousand dollars at his disposal he had bought for every orphan a sweater and a pair of shoes. Moreover, when this glorious afternoon was waning and they marched on deck to fill the waiting boats, a long line of smiling sailors stood ready with more neat packages. And every one of them contained a loaf of white bread and some slices of turkey and an apple tart and two oranges and six priceless lumps of sugar, and a picture card of the flagship with the admiral's autograph. He had sat up half the night to write his name on them. His departing guests piped up "Auld Lang Syne" and the band played them over the side. There was no doubt that the American Navy had distinguished itself.

The very last of the orphans to quit the ship was little Mary MacDonald, escorted into the boat by her two courtiers who exhorted the coxswain to look after her with the most particular care. Santa Claus was again in uniform, but he had not laid his grudge aside with his false whiskers and he eyed Jim Cooney with smouldering hostility. The swab of a gunner's mate had double-crossed him by trying to steal the affections of an innocent child. And there were droves and slathers of orphans to pick from — here was the just grievance. Nor was it soothing to behold the adorable Mary snuggling closer to Cooney when he kissed her good-bye and to hear her say:

"Dinna forget to write me the letter, Uncle Jim, and I'll wear the bonny cap-ribbon for aye."

Toward Henry she displayed sweet, sincere gratitude, but he failed to be rated as an adopted uncle, and she giggled whenever she looked at the scratch on his nose. He was a dour mon, she may have said to herself. His harsh face softened wonderfully as he told her:

"I hope you won't forget me, Mary child, and maybe we can go out for a walk together when I get ashore again. I'm not a village cut-up like some of these smart guys, but you can just bet I'll stand by."

It was observed on board that the two petty officers who had been mateys for ever so long were keeping away from each other. This indicated a serious feud. Their watch divisions had become accustomed to quarrels between them and had listened with amused indifference to the waspish taunts of Cooney and the clumsy retorts of the slow-witted Henry, to the threats of violence which ended in reconciliation. In this instance, however, all attempts at arbitration were futile. Henry sulkily refused to discuss the issue, and Jim Cooney informed their mutual friends:

"The big stiff is too dumb to listen to reason. I tried it on him. You heard him tell us all how we must be happy and kind. He sets a lovely example! I suppose it's my fault that he got jammed in the fake chimney. You'd think so, to listen to him grouch. I'm done, boys. I've played the limit on that damned old bonehead."

There was no more shore liberty at Edinburgh, no opportunity to visit the war orphanage in which wee Mary MacDonald had found shelter. A signal was sent from the hoary Admiralty building in London, and the commander-in-chief of the Grand Fleet relayed it to the battleship divisions, British and American, that rode in the Firth of Forth. Some hint or warning had come from the other side of the North Sea where the German ships were mobilized. The naval intelligence functioned with inscrutable accuracy and its tidings were swiftly transmitted.

Quietly, without delay, the American battleships stole out to sea and vanished like somber shadows. Ahead of them a squadron of battle-cruisers, flying the White Ensign, drove at twenty-five knots, steering straight for the enemy's coast. There was a change of plan, however, or the valorous ambition of the German command had cooled, and after several hours' steaming the American ships swung on a new course and moved northward at a more leisurely gait. They passed the uttermost headlands of Scotland and cautiously sought the narrow fairways where the black tide boiled between islands barren and desolate. Then the wide harbor of Scapa Flow opened to view and the active base of the Grand Fleet.

The ships were to be counted by hundreds, and there was an incessant, complex activity — columns of lean destroyers bound in from patrol duty, their funnels white with the salt spray; dingy trawlers trailing their nets for bigger, uglier fish than they

used to catch on the Dogger Bank; little drifters that plied among the fighting ships on a myriad errands; submarines running awash as they surged outbound to stalk the lurking U-boats; dainty light cruisers which could fight as well as run; seaplanes whirring overhead and the kite balloons gleaming against the sky like so many silvered sausages. Dominating the picture, compelling the attention, were the superdreadnoughts, the bulwark of England and of all civilization, column after column of them. The American sailors had not seen all of the British Navy in the Firth of Forth.

There was much work to be done among the ships that flew the Stars and Stripes — repairs to finish, a new routine to be learned in order that they might fit into the mighty organization, and the many final touches which should whet them to the keenest possible edge for battle. It was the hope and prayer of every officer and enlisted man that the fourteen-inch guns might be trained on something better than a canvas target. These were weary crews at the end of a watch and they were glad to crawl into their hammocks with little grumbling about the lack of recreation in these wind-swept Orkney Islands. After all, the British sailors had endured it for three years and a “Yank” could stand the gaff with any “Limie” that ever trod a deck.

Henry Turnbull was a conscientious boatswain's mate and no fault could be found with his dogged industry and fidelity to duty. He was patient with the flighty lads from the training stations who

fancied themselves sailors and imitated the vices rather than the virtues of "real gobs." They grew fond of him, in a way, but he could make no friends among them without impairing his authority, and, besides, they were mere infants. He had never been a genial member of a petty officers' mess, and his habit of reading books in a blundering, random fashion had served to detach him from the social life that seethed between the crowded decks of a battleship. Now he felt lost and forlorn without the daily intimacy of Jim Cooney who had bullied and cursed him good-naturedly through one cruise after another.

Henry was in a mood to compromise the problem of the orphan who had come between them. When the men assembled after supper for the motion pictures, he sought a seat upon the same bench with Cooney and studied him from the tail of his eye for some indication of friendliness. The gunner's mate gave him no more than a cool nod, however, and preferred to talk with the others around him. Henry glowered at the screen and could find nothing to say. Soon he became absorbed in the scenes of a five-reel drama portrayed with such unusual artistry that his simple heart was stirred by longings vague and wistful.

It was, in part, a rural idyll — a New England landscape in the spring of the year when the apple trees are white with bloom and the purple lilacs burgeon in the dooryards. At the end of a lane which rambled between ancient stone walls stood a small

farmhouse beneath its guardian elms. Expectantly a little girl — her years might have been seven or eight — ran out to the gate and a foolish puppy scampered at her heels. Presently a man turned into the lane and she flew like a bird straight into his arms and he hoisted her upon his stalwart shoulder. He wore a Navy uniform, which impressed Henry Turnbull as a most extraordinary coincidence, and he said to himself, with pensive amazement:

“Just the way I dreamed it! That’s me, as big as life, or I know blamed well it ought to be — home from a cruise and Mary MacDonald hoistin’ welcome signals. What’s the sense of leavin’ her in Scotland? She belongs right in a picture like that, back home in God’s country. I’ll bet I could find the right folks to look after her. And when she got used to me, it ’ud be the same as if we belonged to each other.”

Such were the sentimental fancies of this hard-featured bluejacket of the Regular Navy, who had battered about since boyhood, whose early memories were of mean streets and sordid tenements. Impulsively he turned to say to Jim Cooney who sat silent at his elbow:

“Do you get that? The big idea — right before your eyes! I’ve saved my pay and I can put it across.”

“Had n’t you better consult the little lady?” curtly answered the gunner’s mate. “You may be all wrong. She wrote me a letter — I got it to-day — in her own fist, and the spelling is a riot. And I’m

sending my old woman word that I've found the kid she was looking for."

"But I saw her first," anxiously reiterated Henry.

"There you go again," Jim peevishly exclaimed. "Absolutely nothing doing. You're a rotten poor loser."

Henry sighed and stared at the picture, fearful of missing another glimpse of the farmhouse and the child who so poignantly reminded him of Mary MacDonald. He relinquished the hope of mending matters with Cooney. It was all off between them, he sadly concluded. In his simple code of ethics there was no sin so unpardonable as a dirty deal, and this was what had been handed him, as he mulled it over in his mind. After this he ignored Cooney, who went his own way with a demeanor of cheerful indifference.

The admiral sat in his cabin, his heels cocked up on the desk, spectacles on his nose, while he diverted himself with a frivolous novel. Glancing at the clock, he yawned, and was about to go to bed when the marine orderly entered and gave him a slip of paper from the radio-room.

"For you, sir, personal and immediate. The executive says he will report to you in a minute or two, sir."

The admiral gazed at the first word and then at the numerals which stood for a signature. He did not wait for the rest of it to be decoded. Unruffled, with a manner almost leisurely, he swung around in his chair and pressed a button, then another. The youth-

ful executive entered in haste, the rain dripping from his rubber coat.

"Signal from the C.-in-C. to proceed without delay. Information positive," said the admiral.

"That means the German fleet is out, sir," replied the other, and his eyes were bright.

"So I infer. We have been under two hours' steaming notice since noon. All right, are you?"

"Right as can be, sir. This ship can move on the minute."

The chief-of-staff came into the cabin, followed by the captain of the flagship. The conference was quiet and very brief. In the stormy darkness outside, lights were winking from one American battleship to another while the tiny sparks flashed red or white among the superdreadnoughts of England. Alone in his cabin once more, the admiral laboriously encased himself in sweater, boots, and leather jacket and knitted helmet. Then he cocked his heels upon the desk and finished a chapter of the novel. He was seldom guilty of waste motion. His ships were presumed to be prepared for action. Therefore they were. Such is the law of the Navy.

With no more flurry than this, thousands of men between decks in these huge, darkened ships were stowing hammocks and moving to their stations. There was no shouting of orders or running to and fro. The admiral climbed to his bridge and peered into the gloom a few minutes before the cables clanked in the hawse-holes and the flagship forged slowly ahead. Elsewhere in this populous harbor of Scapa

Flow the divisions of big ships, of destroyers, of cruisers, were taking position or moving seaward, at exact intervals, in a night so black that confusion seemed inevitable. It was a game they had played many times, in all weathers, whenever there was the slightest chance of finding the enemy.

When daylight broke, the gale that lashed the North Sea was tempestuous. The destroyers were buried to their funnels and seemed to come up for breath now and then. The battleships, titanic and stable as they had appeared in smoother water, now wallowed and plunged amid cataracts of foam, crashing dead into the seas that roared across their decks. It seemed impossible to fight their guns amid such commotion as this, but they held to the course and stubbornly endured their punishment.

The crew of the flagship shivered in the flooded living quarters, and were of the opinion that the next war ought to be shifted to a better climate. They were not enthusiastic over the North Sea in winter. Henry Turnbull was glad when the watches were shifted and it came his turn of duty on deck. There was fresh air, at least, and something to look at. He clung to a stanchion in the lee of a weather-screen forward and saw the misty shapes of other battleships to left and right, while in procession astern the American division maintained a flawless formation.

A lieutenant bawled a command and Henry summoned his men. They crept out past the turrets, toward the bow, one or two hesitating as they beheld

the deck submerge and then lift heavily with the water racing across it in shouting torrents. The lieutenant led the way, and they clawed from one life-line to another, swept from their feet, hanging on like grim death. A second squad, in charge of Jim Cooney, followed to help them. The fastenings of a hatch cover had been wrenched off and it was in danger of going adrift. The bluejackets toiled tenaciously, half-strangled, one eye on the towering seas.

Nobody knew how it happened, but there was a yell of alarm and the officers gazing down from the bridge saw two men slide headlong across the deck and strive to regain a foothold as the water propelled them in its rushing onset. One of the twain was Cooney, the gunner's mate, who managed to grasp the other derelict by the leg as though endeavoring to pull him back. Then they were dashed against the low wire railing and the ship rolled far down. When she lifted again, Cooney lay doubled against a wire, but the other man had been carried away on the back of a breaking wave. The North Sea had swept him from the ship to blot him out in a twinkling. Even more tragic it was to perceive that no help could be offered him. Because of the menace of submarine attack the ships of the Grand Fleet were forbidden to stop or even slacken speed to save a drowning sailor.

The cry of "man overboard" was futile, a pitiful mockery. Life preservers were flung from deck and bridge, and the signal passed to the battleships in column astern, but in these wildly disordered seas



WHEN DAYLIGHT BROKE, THE GALE THAT LASHED THE NORTH SEA
WAS TEMPESTUOUS

not a glimpse was descried of the bluejacket who had risked and lost his life in the line of duty. He had ceased to exist even before his comrades were aware that he was gone. The cruel sea had stamped him under. Watching the opportunity they hauled Jim Cooney clear and carried him below. His left arm was broken and the shock had dazed him, but he seemed to forget the pain as he exclaimed:

"I tried to make fast to him — as soon as I saw him start to go. Honest I did, boys. The poor old guy, he never stopped — just floated away like a chip. He was my matey, Bugs Turnbull was, and white clean through."

"A good gob — Henry was all o' that," solemnly agreed one of the infants in blue. "He was bumped off easy, though — never knew what happened to him."

"He was sore on me, and I certainly was rough to him," mourned Cooney, while a surgeon examined his arm. "Ouch! Twist it off, why don't you, Doc, but I guess it serves me right. Why did n't I let Henry have his orphan? That was him all over — heart as big as a cork fender, but as stubborn as a mule, and he chewed on one idea at a time and there was nothing else to it."

"But you always cussed him free and hearty and he seemed to like it," consoled a chief petty officer.

"This was different. He fell for this orphan stuff awful strong. And there had n't been many bright spots in his young life, you can take it from me. Why, we were workin' alongside each other only a

few minutes ago and now he's gone skyhootin' off to Davy Jones. On the level, it seems about as real to me as a moving picture."

Cooney, still berating himself and lamenting his lost matey, was tucked in bed in the sick-bay while the battleship waged her inflexible combat with wind and sea. Scattered over the face of the waters for hundreds of square miles, the mighty armada moved in search of its furtive quarry until the few hours of daylight were gone. It was hopeless to press on when the impenetrable curtain of night closed down. Ship after ship obeyed the signal to return to port. This ended another episode of the day's work, of the secret and untiring vigilance of the Grand Fleet.

The American admiral clambered stiffly down from the bridge to thaw his bulky frame and rest his legs after twelve hours of exposure. To the marine orderly who helped him out of his storm clothes he said:

"Who was the petty officer we lost overboard? A boatswain's mate — but I didn't catch the name."

"Bugs — excuse me, sir — Henry Turnbull. The men feel gloomy about it. He had a clean record, they tell me."

"Turnbull? Why, he was my Santa Claus!" cried the admiral. "Was he married, did you happen to hear? Did he leave any children?"

"No, sir. There's a yarn about an orphan he thought a lot of — one of those kids from Edin-

burgh that came aboard. His chum, Gunner's Mate Cooney, could tell you all about it, but he is out of commission with a busted arm."

"Um-m, thank you. I will see Cooney when he feels like talking. Too bad! A good man snuffed out like a candle, but it's the way of the Service."

"Yes, sir. We're here to-day and gone to-morrow."

Several days later the men of Henry Turnbull's division assembled on the upper deck. It was informal, without orders. They met in accordance with an ancient custom of seafarers, to hold an auction sale of the personal belongings of a drowned shipmate for the benefit of such kinsfolk as he had left behind. For the moment the faces of these boyish sailors were serious and they talked in quieter tones than usual. This was the last rite, the only ceremony which they could offer the memory of the boatswain's mate. The crowd increased as men from other divisions joined them.

Jim Cooney stood among them, his bandaged arm in a sling, refusing to listen to the suggestion that he act as auctioneer. He was still weak, and the task seemed too intimate a thing for him to undertake. A youthful quartermaster consented to serve, and they fetched and opened the canvas bag which contained the worldly possessions of Henry Turnbull. Two or three whispered to Cooney and he stepped forward, baring his head as he began to speak:

"I knew this lad better than most of you. The next of kin that he set down on his enlistment papers was an old crab of an uncle that would n't

give him a penny to save him from starving. But Henry did leave somebody for us to take care of and to remember him by — a little girl named Mary MacDonald that came to our Christmas party. I'm ashamed to stand here and own up to it, but I tried to get Henry's goat and I guess I succeeded. I told him I aimed to adopt this orphan of his, and it was more or less of a josh at the start, but it goes, and I'll stand back of my word. We don't want to send her across until after the war, for it would n't be fair to Henry to have the blessed kid torpedoed, but we can see that she gets out in the country to live in the meantime. I'll go as far as I can, as my duty to a dead shipmate, and you men can do what you like. The little girl ought to have a few dollars as an anchor to wind'ard, and she deserves a first-class education — so it's my idea that whatever you chip in at his auction should be salted away as the 'Henry Turnbull Fund.' The admiral sent for me yesterday, and I put it up to him, and he says he'll be glad to show us how to fix it all safe and legal."

There was a murmur of approval as Cooney stepped aside and several men shook his hand or slapped him on the back. The spirit of the assemblage displayed itself as soon as the quartermaster held up a blue jumper, neatly rolled and tied, and asked for bids.

"Five dollars!" shouted a boy in his teens.

"Ten bucks, you little piker!" came from the edge of the crowd.

“Make it twenty!” declaimed a dapper yeoman. “What’s money good for if there’s no place to blow it?”

“Twenty-five, and keep her rolling!” roared a stoker with shadows of grime beneath his eyes.

The quartermaster grinned. His job was a sine-cure. Jim Cooney wiped his eyes and edged farther back. It would never do to be caught playing the baby, but this tribute, so generous and responsive, appealed to him as inspired by respect for Henry. One by one the articles of clothing were offered to these eager bidders, who bought them for amounts fairly fabulous when compared with their real value. Then came the contents of Henry’s ditty-box — the trinkets, the little odds and ends which he had collected and treasured for one reason or another, and his few books picked up at second-hand shops, including that marvelous treatise which proved that the earth was flat, and the shabby volume of poems that had filled him with the desire to be happy and kind at Christmas-time. When these two books were held to view, Cooney spoke up:

“I’ll consider it a favor, boys, if you will side-step those and let ’em come to me for forty dollars.”

“We will not, but I’ll make you a present of ’em if my bid of fifty dollars is any good,” exclaimed a master-at-arms.

“You’ll have to come through with sixty iron men, Johnny Legs,” was the retort of a grizzled old barnacle of a carpenter’s mate.

This rivalry subsiding, Cooney fumbled in his

pocket and withdrew a small envelope. It contained a sheet of paper, rather smudged and rumpled, upon which a childish hand had written in pencil.

“Here’s a letter for Henry from his orphan,” said Cooney. “It came aboard in yesterday’s mail and I took the liberty of reading it. Mary MacDonald had n’t forgotten him. ‘My dear Christmas friend’ she calls him, and thanks him like a little lady for being good to her. I showed the letter to the admiral and he kind of hinted that he’d like to keep it as a souvenir. So if it’s agreeable to all hands, we’ll accept his bid. He wrote a check and gave it to me, and I don’t have to tell you he came across in handsome style.”

A bugle blew to mark another period in the ceaseless and complex activity of a battleship. The crowd dispersed, but Jim Cooney, gunner’s mate, lingered to gaze at the misty headlands and the passage that led out to the North Sea.

“Poor old Henry won’t have to worry about his orphan,” he said to himself. “He lost, and he won. And maybe he knows all about it.”

TEN FATHOMS DOWN

IN a bay among bleak hills of the Irish coast, an American submarine rolled a wet back out of water and swam slowly ahead like a tired whale coming up to breathe. Through the top of the conning tower crawled two young officers who found room to stand upon the bit of canvas-screened bridge where they faced the nipping winter wind and filled their lungs with it. Their blue uniforms were shabby and sea-stained, the trousers stuffed into rubber boots, heavy sweaters worn beneath the blouses. Their faces, framed in knitted helmets, reminded one of athletes trained to a wire-edge, as though their nervous endurance had been taxed beyond the ordinary. The elder of the two was a senior lieutenant who commanded this S-14 which had strayed so very far from home. His eyes snapped and there was no trace of fatigue in his voice as he said:

"I'll bet you the cigars we slipped one into him that time, Pete! What's he trying to wig-wag? Here, take the glasses."

The navigator gazed at another submarine which had emerged half a mile away. An energetic manikin of a sailor was waving a flag in a series of jerky motions which translated themselves into the message:

"A clean hit. Captain's compliments. Make one more run."

The commander of S-14 grinned with honest

pride and danced a jig-step to warm his congealed toes. This was the last day of practice with the British submarine flotilla, the end of weeks of making ready to fight Fritz with his own weapon. These Englishmen knew the tricks of the trade. For two years they had been playing hide and seek on the North Sea patrol, lurking near Heligoland Bight, dodging German mine fields, ready to ram or torpedo at glimpse of a hostile periscope or conning tower awash. They had been successful, although the cost was heavy, and this was why the American submarines had made a wild voyage of it across the Atlantic in mid-winter to join forces.

Down below in S-14 the crew relaxed during the brief respite and gathered amidships to breathe the sweet air which gushed through the open hatch. They, too, were muffled and booted to withstand the damp and penetrating chill of their steel-walled prison. They suffered their manifold discomforts with an amazing and courageous good-nature and rather pitied the lads who had been left on home duty. The word was passed that they had officially destroyed their friendly antagonist, the British submarine, by plunking a torpedo with a dummy head into him at a thousand yards, and all hands seemed as delighted as if they had received an increase of pay. The commander's long legs came clumping down the steel ladder, preceded by the chubby navigator. Then the round hatch plate was screwed down, the boat was again tightly sealed, and the order given to stand by to submerge.

Deftly trimmed, the boat sank with a slant barely perceptible and hung at twenty-five feet while the skipper and the navigator stood at the two periscopes and turned them to rake the wide bay. The British submarine had vanished. It was a guessing match. S-14 dropped a little lower until the exposed sections of her slender periscopes had sunk beneath the surface lest they betray her position. The electric motors purred softly in the brilliantly lighted compartment, which was fairly crammed with machinery. The submarine stole ahead, guided by the gyroscope compass in its great bowl. A few minutes and the pumps throbbed as water was expelled from ballast tanks. The boat rose a little for a hasty observation through the lenses of the magical tubes. The skipper discerned something that looked like a bit of stick floating upright. His boat turned, poised itself, and the gunners crouching at the forward torpedo gearing were told to flood the port tube. Presently the bow lifted a trifle, there was the cough of compressed air expanding, and the long missile sped on its run.

"All done," said the skipper to the sallow engineer officer. "Hook her up and let's go as soon as she is awash."

Again S-14 boiled up to show a dripping deck, and this time as many of the crew as were not on watch scrambled outside to crowd upon the narrow platform and greedily light cigarettes. The oil engines sang noisily and the diving rudders folded back against the hull very much as an elephant

moves its ears. Presently the British submarine appeared and laid a course to jog homeward in a sociable manner. Her commander shouted through a megaphone:

“A close call — that last run of yours — missed us by twenty feet; but it was a jolly good morning’s work, old man.”

“Well, I scuppered you once, and that is usually considered enough,” replied the Yankee lieutenant.

“The blighter of a Hun might think so, what? Dinner at seven-thirty to-night. Don’t forget. Right-o! See you later.”

Soon the two submarines steered divergent paths to make for their respective mother ships which were anchored some distance apart. S-14 slackened speed and turned to find a resting-place against the outermost submarine of the row of them which snuggled abreast beside the big steamer. The crew poured out and recklessly footed it across the narrow planks from one deck to the next, and dived into the spacious quarters of this mother ship, where they could eat hot meals at real tables and find room to swing hammocks until the call should come for the first long tour of patrol duty. Lieutenant James Slayback, skipper of S-14, stripped off his greasy garments, danced under a hot shower, and proceeded to array himself in a spick-and-span uniform. This was likewise the programme of Peter Morton, navigating lieutenant, and young Penfield, engineer officer.

They went off in a launch to the British ship.

which had once been an Australian liner, and were escorted into the ward-room as guests of a score of submarine officers who might have told you something about what the Royal Navy was doing. But they turned red and were frightfully embarrassed when one questioned them about their own exploits, and preferred to talk shop among themselves in the most matter-of-fact manner. Cordial and genuine was the hospitality displayed toward the American guests. They were all men of the same trade with a feeling of mutual respect. There was no such thing as bluffing it in submarines. The officers were picked men, survivals of the fittest.

After dinner the captain commanding the British flotilla entered the ward-room to greet the visitors and bid them god-speed. Their admiring gaze was held by the bit of ribbon upon the breast of his coat. It was the token of the Victoria Cross. No words could have conveyed, with such thrilling emphasis, what men had dared and done in submarines. The captain's manner was winsome, his demeanor almost shy, but the occasion seemed to demand a speech of some sort and he said:

"It has been awfully pleasant to have you Americans with us. You have shown no end of pluck and — er' — not a bit of what we used to call Yankee brag, don't you know. It was a mistaken impression, I fancy. Tourists and that sort of thing may have fostered it. And I imagine you thought the Englishman was an ass. There were some dreadful bounders traveling about — impossible persons who posed as

typical Britons. However, we begin to know each other a trifle better, I'm sure.

"Er — your S-14 will be the first American submarine to finish training and be assigned to sea duty. I have encountered Fritz several times — that is to say, I was lucky enough to strafe a U-boat or two, if you will pardon this personal reference. I mention it merely to assure you that the Hun is a cowardly fighter at close quarters in submarine warfare. He does n't like it. Go at him hell-for-leather and you'll get his wind up. This service of ours is uncomfortable and all that, but it's immensely sporting. One is rather certain to have a run for his money, which is what we are here for, is n't it? Gentlemen of the ward-room, I propose the health of S-14 and her gallant officers and men! Here's to a successful cruise and our hearts will be with you."

The fine simplicity of this farewell touched the emotions of the guests, who briefly spoke their thanks like manly sailors. This evening in the ward-room impressed them with the fact that in addition to the high traditions of the American naval service as an inspiration they were inseparably linked with the cause of their British comrades. For the time they were as one navy and England was glad to honor such victories as they might win. When the three Americans had returned to their own ship, they sat and smoked in Lieutenant Jim Slayback's cabin and concluded that there was no life like hunting the foe in a submarine.

Two days after this, S-14 moved out of the bay,

running on the surface, and the bold coasts of Ireland dropped slowly astern. At sunset the solitary submarine was a speck on the surface of a rolling ocean otherwise untenanted. Not yet compelled to submerge, she held on her way through the night and moved at ten knots toward the area designated as a patrol block. The crew slept and stood watch in turn, curling up on the floor or in odd corners, stowing themselves as best they could, never bothering to remove their clothes. They led what would have been called an intolerable existence ashore.

When daylight came, S-14 began to find the voyage otherwise than monotonous. A British seaplane, soaring like a great bird of prey, came swooping out of the east at a hundred miles an hour. The American submarine dallied not to attempt a recognition signal, but dived in haste. Into the foaming wash as she went under, the vigilant seaplane dropped two depth bombs which exploded with annoying violence. They shook S-14 from bow to stern, smashed a dozen electric-light bulbs, and caused the coffee-pot to jump off the heater. This last calamity was resented by Lieutenant James Slayback, who testily remarked to the navigator:

"I call that discourteous, to heave bombs on us just at breakfast-time. The fool of a seaplane has scalded a perfectly good cook, and came mighty near getting our number."

"Yes, and he'll probably claim that he potted a Hun," bitterly replied Peter Morton. "That's the only part of this game that I don't fancy. Your own

friends seem so infernally anxious to put a crimp in you."

For the rest of the day, S-14 went warily, with an eye cocked for trouble, as one might say. It was safer to stay submerged, for she was crossing the routes of merchant traffic and gunners were alert to blaze away at the first glimpse of a periscope. Reluctant to run on his storage batteries any more than could be helped, the commander made a surface run whenever the sea seemed clear, but an American destroyer caught him at it and surged at thirty knots to ram and scatter the merry depth bombs. It was then that the hunted submarine broke its best record for quick submersion and slid a hundred and forty feet toward the bottom before the flickering needles of the depth gauges showed that she was held and steadied.

"“This service of ours is immensely sporting, what?”” pensively echoed Navigating Lieutenant Peter Morton as he wiped a perspiring brow. ““One is rather certain to have a run for his money, don’t you know.””

“And the executive of that destroyer is a cousin of mine. He owes me money,” said Slayback. “I recognized the boat in spite of her drunken dazzle paint. He has visions of a ‘well done’ signal from Admiral Sims.”

“Well, we’ll soon be clear of those wild-eyed destroyers, Jim. They don’t frequent our beat.”

“Out of the frying-pan into the fire, Pete. Those British destroyers are wide-awake, believe me. And the trawlers lay miles of nets with neat little

mines tied to 'em. It's up to you to keep clear of them."

"They are plainly marked on our Admiralty charts, but I can't answer for the set of the tides and currents," was the cheerful reply. "And the confounded nets and mines are always going adrift and then you bump into 'em where they had n't ought to be. Did you know I own a farm in Virginia? An uncle wished it on me. There are times when it appeals."

The submarine veered from the wide Atlantic and crept into shoaling waters. She groped and felt her way through perils unseen where an error of judgment or a blunder in direction meant instant death. There was no opportunity to climb on deck and find relief from the cramped quarters and heavy, clammy air. The grimmest part of the long ordeal had begun. For hours she would lie on the bottom while the officers clamped the receiver of the listening device to their ears and the delicate microphones conveyed the distant sounds of a throbbing engine or the beat of a propeller. The hardships were not so severe and unrelenting as during the stormy winter passage across the Atlantic, but the nervous tension was more acute.

This was the first cruise on actual patrol against the enemy. The conditions were novel. Their task was to intercept the predatory U-boats as they followed the secret channels in and out through their own mine fields. It was one thing to hunt them, another thing to feel that they might be also hunting you. At intervals more or less regular S-14 lifted her periscopes and scanned the sea around the circle of

the horizon. The weather was rough, and if they tried to lie awash and open a hatch at night, a gray comber was likely to slap aboard and flood the boat. They had to risk it now and then, of course, in order to freshen the air below. After ten or twelve hours of submersion, headaches were common and one had to fight drowsiness. The men suffered from lack of exercise, and the monotony was deadly.

Now Lieutenant James Slayback was a first-class submarine officer and as a commander he had won the confidence of his crew. His physique was not robust, however, and his nerves were strung too taut. The winter of terrifically hard work had wearied him more than he realized. He had scoffed at the idea of a few days' leave and a trip to London while training with the British flotilla.

Under the strain of this cruise on patrol his temper became a bit ragged, although he was unaware of it. Chubby Peter Morton, whose well-cushioned body sheltered the soul of an imperturbable optimist, perceived that the skipper's feelings were easily hurt. He discussed it with young Penfield, the engineer officer, who was too busy with the temperamental machinery and batteries to think about himself.

"The old man is as irritable as a setting hen," observed Peter. "He bawled out the boatswain's mate this morning for no reason at all. And this made some of the other men sulky. You have to humor 'em, 'specially when they are shy of sleep and have n't had a smoke for two days."

"I've noticed it," agreed young Penfield. "But we

must jolly him along and swallow his insults. He is the best that ever was."

"It's the wife and baby," sagely suggested the navigator, who was a dashing bachelor. "Jim is one of those family men that take it awful hard. He has never seen the baby. It was born after we came over, and he sits and fusses and yearns and worries until it gets his goat."

"Single men for submarine service," said the sentimental engineer, who had left a girl in every port. "I don't mind telling you, Pete, that I am in love, and she is a perfect dream — but as for mourning over her — nix on that stuff."

"Right you are, old top. Now, if I had a wife and she knew I was sitting down here under fifty feet of water, waiting to see if Fritz gets me before I get him, I'll bet she would worry a lot about me. That's the way women are built. There is my mother, for instance. She's as brave as they make 'em, but she did n't like it when I was assigned to submarine duty overseas."

The cook interrupted to tell that supper was ready, so they joined the commander at a tiny, swinging table in the open space amidships which was dubbed the ward-room by courtesy. Lieutenant Jim Slayback scowled at the canned beans and sliced ham, and had little to say until Peter Morton, in an amiable effort to promote sociability, ventured to exclaim:

"By Jove, you have n't shown us the baby's picture more than twice to-day! Trot it out again and brighten our cheerless lives."

There was a tone of persiflage which the skipper obviously resented, but the topic was so dear to him that he eagerly replied:

"It must be a wonder of an infant. Far be it from me to boast, but he *is* an extraordinary youngster for four months. I give you my word —"

"The image of its daddy, of course," gravely observed the navigator, who had a fatal weakness for teasing. "It walks, talks, and tells all visitors that it was sired by the most promising and efficient officer in this man's navy."

"Oh, shut up, Pete!" snapped the proud parent. "I did n't mean to bore you. I'll stow the picture away."

"By no means, Jim. If the child inherits your disposition, it must be a little gleam of sunshine. Try a plate of beans."

"The grub is rotten, and you're a cursed nuisance with your eternal joshing!" hotly retorted the skipper.

Poor Morton perceived that he had blundered. His innocent merriment was ill-timed. The engineer nudged him, and he replied, with feeling:

"That's a bit strong, Jim. You don't really mean it. I'm sorry if I rubbed you the wrong way, but I think you owe me an apology."

"Apology be hanged. It's time somebody put the lid on your chatter!" cried Slayback, shoving his plate aside.

"Whew, you *are* pleasant to live with, aren't you?" rapped out the navigator, who had a temper

of his own. "My chatter, as you call it, will annoy you no longer. It's all off."

"Thank God for that," growled the other man as he left the table. "Stand by to blow tanks. I'm going up to take a look-see before dark."

From her resting-place on the sandy bottom, S-14 floated toward the surface with positive buoyancy. Instead of breaking water she paused quiescent and concealed while only the tops of the periscope tubes betrayed her presence. The wind was dying with the sun and the sea had subsided. The air was unusually clear. The field of vision was unmarred. The skipper stood at the eye-piece, gripping the handles with which he revolved the long tube. As he slowly swung it, a startled ejaculation burst from his lips. Sharply defined in miniature, he beheld the outline of a submarine etched black against the rim where sea and sky met. The powerful lenses disclosed this other boat as awash with conning tower exposed, and moving at a leisurely gait as though confident that no danger threatened.

The skipper of S-14 marked the course which the distant submarine was steering. It was an enemy, bound in from an offshore cruise. No friendly boats would be found in this patrol area. Steady and cool, his ragged nerves forgotten, Lieutenant Jim Slayback swiftly calculated what should be done. A gesture told the navigator to jump to the other periscope. They gazed for a moment in silence and glanced at the compass. Together they worked out the enemy's speed and direction and the angle of intersection for

S-14. A word of command and the crew went quietly about their several duties. There was no excitement, but an eagerness tense, restrained, disciplined, to commit no faults, to operate the boat at the top-notch of efficiency. As still as graven images the two petty officers sat perched upon their stools in front of the depth gauges and controlled the mechanism of the diving rudders as a good rider feels the mouth of a spirited horse.

"I doubt if Fritz caught a glimpse of us," muttered Slayback, who was talking to himself. "We were almost in the path of the sun with no more than three feet of periscope showing."

"Ready to dive, there!" he exclaimed, in a slightly louder voice. "Crack the main valve! Lively, now! Hold her at thirty feet and go ahead on your motors."

Wholly beneath the surface, S-14 stole forward, blind and yet directed by a trained intelligence which had been arduously schooled for just such an episode as this. Her speed increased, reckless of draining the precious current from the storage batteries. The skipper held his watch in his hand, checking off the run, minute by minute. S-14 rose a little and the wake of the periscope made a V-shaped ripple. It was for a momentary observation. Then they vanished. The course had been true. The U-boat was no more than four hundred yards distant. Slayback ordered the helmsman to swerve a trifle to starboard. Then from where he stood at the periscope he pulled trigger, once, again, and launched both bow torpedoes.

Breathlessly all hands waited for the muffled shock of an explosion. Nothing happened.

"Missed with both barrels," groaned the navigator. "For Heaven's sake, Jim, let me have a squint at him."

The disgusted skipper told his men to let her come up. Then he perceived that the U-boat, taking alarm, had veered from her course in a desperate zigzag maneuver and baffled the torpedo attack in the nick of time. Fritz was about to dive in a tremendous hurry and hunt for safety in the depths. He could not fire his own torpedoes without swinging so as to bring his broadside to bear and he cared not to risk making himself so easy a target.

"Full speed ahead and ram the son of a gun!" yelled Slayback, shaking his fist at the image in the periscope. "He's ducked like a scared rabbit. Cut him in two! Hold her as she is. Easy with the helm. He's our meat. Look out for the devil of a bump."

The American submarine rushed forward for a hundred yards before slanting upward to finish her charge. It was to be a duel on the surface if she could overtake the U-boat before it fled to cover. Taken by surprise, perhaps dazed by this deadly onslaught, the German sailors were not swift enough. Their boat had begun to settle. The deck was under water, but the conning tower was still visible, and from its top a long heavy wire cable or stay which extended to a ring-bolt in the bow.

S-14 arrived just too late for the head-on collision

which would have crushed the enemy's hull like an egg. Instead of this terrific impact, the rounded, blunt-nosed bow slid across the enemy's deck with a jar and a scrape which knocked the American crew this way and that. The attacking submarine failed to pass over the half-submerged U-boat, and halted abruptly, seemed to rebound, then hung where she was, the two boats somehow interlocked. S-14 could neither back away nor forge ahead. She was resting across the U-boat, the two hulls at right angles to each other.

"Any damage?" Lieutenant Slayback anxiously asked his engineer.

"Motors turning over all right, sir, and her skin seems as tight as a bottle," calmly answered young Penfield whose sallow complexion showed a distinct pallor. "We seem to have waltzed on top of old Fritz with the intention of roosting there. It's 'immensely sporting,' really."

"My word, yes," blandly chimed in the navigator. "What are we going to do about it? Fritz is still going down."

The commander appeared absurdly perplexed, but rallied to say: "This beats me, and then some. Try to hold him up, if you can, and perhaps we can get clear. If we are able to lay him aboard, it will be an old-fashioned scrap. Rifles and cutlasses, boys. Get 'em ready, and fix bayonets."

There were yelps of delight as the men jumped for the racks, but the engineer who stood by the pumps and motors with his machinist's mates was seen to

shake his head in a dubious manner. Intent on his job he exclaimed:

"If the darned Hun is heading for the bottom, I guess we have to go along with him. And I don't see ourselves getting clear. What did we do, Pete? Jam our nose under that wire stay that is stretched from his conning tower?"

"Precisely that, dear old thing," replied the navigator. "That wire stay of his has a saw-toothed edge and is rigged to cut through nets. It will stand more strain than we can put on it, all right. We drove under it and caught ourselves on something or other."

S-14 was trying to rise by emptying ballast tanks as fast as the water could be blown out of them, but the fateful depth gauges showed that she was very slowly going down at an uncomfortable slant. The crew was no longer elated, and the men who had been buckling on the cutlass-belts were waiting for further orders. Although undismayed they were hushed. They confided to each other in whispers. In the bright illumination of the electric bulbs, their youthful faces seemed suddenly to have become haggard with anxiety. The boatswain's mate, who was a veteran at the submarine game, swore in a peevish manner. This seemed to ease the strain. One or two men laughed.

The commander was absorbed in his own thoughts, weighing his knowledge and experience, testing this conclusion and that. He knew that his men were keenly watching him. In this supreme crisis he was the hope of salvation. It was possible that he had damaged the German submarine sufficiently to dent

or start the plates and rivets and cause leakage. In this event the enemy was slowly drowning instead of deliberately diving, but there was no way of getting at the facts. Slayback pored over the chart to which the navigator silently called his attention. The depth of water was marked as ten fathoms, or sixty feet, a stretch of sandy bottom where the sea was comparatively shoal. Locked in a deadly embrace like two monsters of the deep which had blindly grappled with each other, the two submarines were vanishing from the surface upon which they would leave no trace.

"Fritz is dragging us down with him," admitted the commander as he looked up from the chart. "We can't get buoyancy enough to hold up all that dead weight. And we don't seem to be wiggling out of the mess."

"Nothing doing," agreed Peter Morton, trying to steady his voice. "We got our Hun, first crack out of the box, but we don't know what to do with the blighter. Anyhow, he can't be feeling very snappy himself."

Slayback's manner was curiously formal, as though he could not forget the affronts exchanged over the supper-table.

"Better turn off some of the lights, Mr. Morton. There's no sense in wasting current. We may be under water for some time."

There was no sense of motion within the submarine excepting a somewhat sharper slant of the floor as she continued to descend. Occasionally a slight tremor

passed through the steel shell of the hull as the keel scraped upon the deck of the U-boat. It was futile to attempt release by means of the motors. If the wire stay should break under the strain, S-14 would instantly shoot up to the surface with every ounce of buoyancy she possessed. Young Penfield rubbed a grimy nose and spoke what was in every one's mind.

"A diver could cut that stay and free us in a jiffy."

A boyish seaman giggled at this and was unable to check his mirth. It was a symptom of hysteria. The commander threw up his head and stood as erect as if on parade. He was indomitable. Sternly he exclaimed:

"None of that stuff, boys. You are not that kind. The Navy expects every man to do his duty, sink or swim. We are not licked, by a long shot. This is n't the first submarine that has had to sit on the bottom when she did n't want to. I don't expect to hear any growling until we have stood twenty-four hours of it. I'm not going to twiddle my thumbs, understand?"

Some of them grinned at this, and a few stretched themselves on the floor with coats or sweaters under their heads. They would have to go on watch later in the night, but it might have been observed that they stared at the ceiling and felt no desire for sleep. S-14 had finished the descent and was now stable. Her bow was upheld by the U-boat upon which she rested. It was comprehended by the American officers that nothing more could be done until morning came. The sea above them was enveloped in darkness. Any scheme for revealing their plight to passing ships

must wait for the light. They fell to wondering what had happened to the U-boat and its imprisoned crew separated from them only by the steel plates of the two hulls.

After a time they heard sounds of metal striking metal, like the rap-rap of machinists' hammers. It was uncanny, painful to listen to, for the men trapped in S-14 felt no inclination to gloat over a foe who was in the same tragic predicament. The Huns deserved it, but there are limits to vengeance. The noise of hammers and other tools became louder, more insistent, as though the artisans were toiling in a frenzy of haste.

"We busted things for 'em somehow," said Peter Morton, his ear against the side of the boat. "They are certainly trying to make repairs."

"We did our best to drown the pirates," replied the engineer. "Maybe we turned that same little trick."

"Do you know, I'd be mighty glad to find their boat is sound and tight!" exclaimed Peter, as one advancing a bright idea. "Sooner or later they would have to blow tanks and carry us up with them. They may think we are holding them down on purpose, to see who cracks first."

"Foolish, my son. I hate to dispute you," said young Penfield. "That U-boat is in trouble. And it is not motors or diving gear. I can tell by the sounds. The beggars are doing their darndest to keep the water out. Their boat is flooding."

The surmise was correct, as was proved at midnight. There was no more rat-tat of hammers, but

significant silence. At length, and after a long interval, there came a faint tapping. It was cadenced and methodical, repeated again and again. The navigator of S-14 pricked up his ears and looked bewildered. He harkened intently. Then he said to the commander:

“A message — international Morse — it’s in English. Write it down as I spell it out.”

Slayback picked up a pencil and jotted down the letters. The men approached and peered over his shoulder. They felt awe, as though a ghost were trying to signal them. Upon the slip of paper they watched the letters group themselves into these two words:

“WE S-U-R-R-E-N-D-E-R—”

They listened, in strained suspense. A few minutes passed and the metallic rapping was resumed, but more feebly, with a halting irregularity. It attempted to convey the same message, but got no farther than “W-E S-U-R-R-E-N-D—”

Another long pause, and barely audible was the word:

“H-E-L-P—”

This was the last call from the U-boat. The silence remained unbroken. Lieutenant Peter Morton remarked, in subdued accents:

“I guessed right. They did think we were trying to hold them down. Well, there’s one U-boat crossed off the list. Filled to the hatches and all hands dead.”

“I don’t want to croak,” confided young Penfield, careful lest he be overheard by the men, “but it

looks as if we had played our last bet. I was gambling on the hope that Fritz might shove us up to the top."

Conversation lagged. There were brooding lapses. The boatswain's mate had climbed from the stool in front of his depth gauge and was thumbing a greasy pack of cards in a solitaire which presaged good luck whenever it came out right, which had happened twice in four years.

"I wish the guy that invented this solitaire gadget was cooped up with us," he grumbled to himself. "I'd treat him rough. This is the night for her to come through. King on a jack and I'm ditched again, by cripes."

The commander sat by the little table, his hands clasped behind his head, his eyes half-closed. His lip twitched and one foot moved restlessly. His brain was so active that the thoughts seemed to revolve in fiery circles, to be searing grooves as they incessantly pursued one another. It was approaching the hour of dawn when he rose abruptly and beckoned his two officers. The air in the submarine was becoming foul. They found it difficult to ward off drowsiness. Morton picked up the coffee-pot and took three cups from the rack.

Slayback regarded them with somber earnestness before he said: "You heard Captain Barnard tell the yarn one night aboard the British mother ship. He called it one chance in a million, but he won."

"Yes, but that was different," argued Norton. "He was in home waters, close to Harwich, and the

destroyers were looking for his boat. They knew pretty well where he had gone down. We are well over toward the German coast and the chance of being picked up is far from merry and bright."

"If a Hun finds one of us men floating about," suggested the engineer, "he will thank you for the information and drop a few bombs on poor old S-14 instead of trying to fish her up."

"I realize all that," stubbornly protested the commander, "but one chance in a million is better than none at all. And you know what will happen to us within the next forty-eight hours."

"Please don't mention it," courteously exclaimed Morton. "We can blow some fresh atmosphere into the boat from the compressed air flasks, but that will only defer the what-do-you-call-'em — the obsequies. I feel far from blithesome this morning. Our goose appears to be most thoroughly cooked."

"One of us three must go up in the bubble," announced the skipper, "with a coil of light line and some kind of a buoy. He can stay afloat for several hours with a kapok vest on. I stand by the ship, of course, and the engineer officer is indispensable. He can't be spared. You are elected, Morton."

"It means a chance of life for the man who goes up in the bubble, and only one can go," slowly spoke the navigator. "It is a mighty slim chance, but just that much better than no chance at all."

"About an even break, whether you try it or stay down here," said the skipper, "but a man prefers to die in the open air if he can."

"Here is where I mutiny!" exclaimed Peter Morton. "I pass the buck. After you, my dear Jim."

"Shut up and listen to me!" flared Slayback. "This is your superior officer talking."

"I understand perfectly," calmly replied the navigator. "Penfield and I were discussing things when you called us. I am strong for the bubble idea, but you have picked the wrong man. I am not joshing, Jim, and for God's sake keep your temper. It's that wife and baby of yours, old man — the grandest baby in the Navy. I am free, single, and otherwise inconsequential. Therefore I refuse to soar in the bubble."

"Nonsense! You will do what I tell you!" angrily retorted the skipper. "Do you suppose I am going to shirk my duty?"

Morton appeared to hesitate and evaded the issue. In terms highly technical the trio thrashed out the details of the hoped-for escape through the conning tower. It had been done only once in submarine history, and this was one reason why Captain Barnard wore the Victoria Cross. Carefully they rehearsed the programme of building up pressure in the conning tower by means of a pipe connection with the compressed-air flasks. With both hatches sealed the confined space would be an air-lock and the man enclosed therein would be shot toward the surface in the huge bubble or uprush of air when the upper hatch should be released. It was not referred to, but they recalled the fact that Captain Barnard had attempted it after another officer had broken his neck

against the edge of the upper hatch of the conning tower, so violently was he propelled in the bubble.

The clock told them that daylight was stealing over the sea. The men pressed forward to shake Morton's hand. Their eyes were wistful, their speech stammering. He was about to make ready for the forlorn adventure when the commander said, in a low voice:

"I apologize, Pete. Forget it, will you? I have been a good deal of a brute this voyage."

The navigator smiled inscrutably, but his frank features were illumined with affection as he replied:

"*I was* a silly nuisance, Jim. However, I'll gamble my last dollar that it's a wonderful baby. Let's go. You had better stand by to get things started."

The boatswain's mate, who was a man of muscle and decision, had stepped forward in response to a word from the engineer. They whispered together and Morton halted to say something as he passed them. They nodded, and the boatswain's mate made a singularly cryptic remark:

"Sure, I'll lend a hand to the mutiny and glad of it. I saw the baby's picture."

Never suspecting a fond conspiracy, Lieutenant James Slayback climbed the ladder to unclamp the lower hatch of the conning tower and give the navigator his final instructions. The engineer officer and the boatswain's mate were at hand in case of need. They were aware that the commander had put on his kapok vest during the night for the sake of warmth. The buoy and the coil of line were ready to be re-

leased. With infinite caution they prepared to launch the perilous adventure. Navigator Peter Morton clambered into the conning tower, but before the others could close the lower hatch plate and seal him inside, he was seen to trip and stumble. In the endeavor to save himself he fell through the round opening and collided with the commander who stood upon the ladder.

Lieutenant Jim Slayback was knocked to one side, and while he was recovering himself and demanding to know what the devil the matter was, strong arms pushed him from below. He was powerless to resist the tremendous heave with which he was hoisted up the ladder and jammed into the conning tower. Instantly the round plate was pulled down with a bang and secured from beneath. Bewildered, using violent language, he was conscious of the fact that he was the man who must try to go up in the bubble, for there was no return to the interior of the submarine. He was outwitted, disobeyed, kidnaped.

Anxiously and carefully he opened the valve which admitted a rush of compressed air from the storage flasks below. The pressure increased in the conning tower until it distressed him, but he endured it until he felt certain that the propulsive force would overcome the weight of the water upon the upper hatch plate and so expel him as a projectile. Methodically he released the dogs which held the plate fast and in a swirling chaos of air and water he was borne upward like a chip, choking, strangled, bruised. It seemed an eternity before he boiled to the surface almost insen-

sible in the foaming eddies of the bubble. Soon the tingling chill of the water revived him, and he swam languidly, no more than enough to keep his head from submersion. The daylight seemed glaring. It almost blinded him as he blinked at an empty sea upon which no shipping was visible. It was splendid to be alive, but he took no thought for himself. Poignantly he reflected that he had been compelled to desert his submarine, and that his loyal comrades, more than thirty of them, were waiting in sublime faith and courage for the rescue which he alone might vouchsafe to them. He was far better dead unless they, too, could be saved.

The buoy, a slab of cork coated with white paint, floated a few yards from him. He swam to it and tugged at the slender cord. The other end held firm. It was fastened to the hull of S-14. This was somehow comforting. He felt himself to be in communication with his men, although they could not know whether he was dead or alive. Time meant nothing to him. He tried to reckon the hours by the sun as it climbed the sky, but his vision was uncertain. He was drifting into a merciful stupor caused by the shock of his expulsion in the bubble.

Two British destroyers, coursing swiftly homeward, veered to investigate a spreading slick of oil which a lookout reported from the crow's-nest. At closer range the officers descried a floating body which they presumed to be that of a drowned German from a U-boat which had met disaster. Fortunately they picked him up before releasing a few

depth bombs where the patches of oil were most conspicuous. While they stripped off his clothes and tucked him in a bunk, he managed to murmur something about an American submarine and a Hun that had gone to Davy Jones together. A tumbler of Scotch whiskey neat jolted Lieutenant James Slayback into life and he sat up in the bunk.

"Carry on," ejaculated the destroyer captain, who was tanned by North Sea weather. "You are an extraordinary bit of wreckage, old chap. What's this about S-14 all tight and comfy ten fathoms down? You popped up in the bubble? That scores one on Captain Johnny Barnard, eh?"

"Find a diver," muttered Slayback. "We jammed the Hun hard and fast."

"Did him in. How gorgeous! A bit awkward, though, I fancy. Been down twelve hours? There is a diving suit and pump aboard, of course, and we'll borrow a human fish from the other destroyer. Our own diver broke a leg last trip. Awfully inconvenient! Meanwhile we'll drag with a wire sweep and find that jolly old submarine of yours. It will buck your lads up to feel the sweep bangin' and scrapin' about the hull."

The American lieutenant dug his knuckles into his eyes and cried like a tired child. The British officer stole out of the stateroom and closed the door. When he tiptoed in a little later, the commander of S-14 was deep in peaceful slumber. The lines which had been graven on his care-worn features were already erasing themselves. When he awoke, the room was shadowy. He looked through a round port and saw

that the day was almost done. All his fear and anxiety rushed back to torture him. How could he have slept while his shipmates were still imperiled? He was about to go on deck, but he felt pitifully weak and paused to gather strength.

Just then there was an uproar of cheering from the lusty throats of two hundred British bluejackets. It was a mighty chorus of welcome and applause. It thrilled the soul of Lieutenant James Slayback with jubilant vigor. He fairly bolted for the exit to the bridge. Midway between the two British destroyers, a Yankee submarine rode buoyant and unhurt while her hatches flew open and men began to spill out as if they were shot from a gun. They lined the narrow strip of deck, jostling each other, almost falling overboard, and they capered and danced like so many wiry lunatics. Upon the tiny bridge above the conning tower appeared Lieutenant Peter Morton and young Penfield who pounded each other like men bent on manslaughter. They caught sight of their commander, and the chubby navigator bellowed:

"I apologize, sir. It's my turn. Mutiny is a capital offense. I shall put myself in irons at once."

"No hurry, Pete," the skipper shouted back. "Everything all right aboard?"

"It will be as soon as we get a smoke. Penfield wants to test out the motors and loaf about until he can charge his batteries."

The British commander appeared amused as he said to Slayback: "One of the destroyers will stand by. You are quite sure you finished off the Hun?"

"Quite sure, but you may drag him up if you like."

"I shall be delighted. We'll slip a couple of wires under him and have him on top to-morrow morning. Will your boat proceed to port for an overhauling and to give the crew a bit of a rest?"

"Not if we can help it," replied the American sailor. "We'll stay with you overnight and then resume our patrol."

"Splendid," was the cordial verdict, and Slayback was greatly pleased.

S-14 was no longer a novice at the grim game of stalking the Hun. She had been tried and she had endured. The commander of this veteran submarine went aboard to congratulate his men. Weary, unwashed, their clothes disreputable, they were heroic in the eyes of Lieutenant Slayback, U.S.N. He told them so, in few words and simple. The boatswain's mate replied for all hands:

"It's all in a lifetime. And there's no drowning this outfit with a skipper like you, sir."

TOO SCARED TO RUN

“You wud be a real, two-fisted gob, Jerry, me boy!” hoarsely exclaimed the quartermaster. “I see it in your eye. I have watched you iver since you come aboard this destroyer. ’T is dinned in me ears ’til I am sick of it that th’ lads of the new Navy all come from good homes an’ is famous for gentlemanly manners. What is a navy for, annyhow? Who was it won all the great sea-fights an’ ructions that history tells us of? Pickled sailor-men, hard an’ hairy an’ tattoed, same as me, that had no manners whatever an’ was n’t afraid of a drink, a shindy, or a frolic.”

They were loafing far aft on the fan-tail of an American destroyer which nosed a buoy in Queens-town Harbor with sister ships sociably nestled on either side of her. Jerry Harmstead, ordinary seaman, was very young. He would have been a freshman in college if the war had not interfered. Tall and big-boned, he had not yet outgrown the awkward age. His shyness had been rubbed off by intimate contact with a hundred other bluejackets who were jammed together below decks in this slim-waisted destroyer, but he lacked confidence in his own opinions and was easily impressed. Of a romantic turn, young Jerry had written verses for his school magazine.

A barnacle of the old Navy was Martin Delaney, quartermaster, whose record was lurid with lapses

which had thwarted his dreams of promotion. He was a survival. There were only a few of him left. He belonged with the age of steam frigates spreading lofty yards, when the flatfoot boasted that every finger was a fish-hook and every hair a rope-yarn. The highly educated destroyer officers, who were technicians, navigators, and ordnance experts, regarded him as a picturesque relic and treated him with tolerance. They wondered why he had been shoved into this young man's game and the answer seemed to be that he was too tough to be broken by hardship.

Guileless Jerry Harmstead, who had to confess that he came from a good home, was respectfully attentive whenever the sinful quartermaster spun his yarns of Valparaiso and Suez and the China station. These were glimpses of the Navy such as the youngster had fancied it to be. It was flattering to be singled out as a comrade of this veteran sea dog with whom an American vice-admiral had shaken hands when he came aboard to inspect the destroyer.

Leaning over the taffrail where the depth bombs hung like metal kegs, the quartermaster spat into the tide and resumed his monologue.

"An' what does this gintlemanly crew do when it hits the beach, Jerry, me lad? These bold sculpins swarm to a roller-skatin' rink an' steam in circles 'til their tongues hang out, or they set in th' Sailors' Club all stiff an' solemn an' squint at movin' pictures. Is that seein' life? Is it proper recreation for a tired destroyer-man?"

Jerry Harmstead thought it over and replied in his demure, boyish manner:

“Well, Martin, they seem to like it, and it means a lot nowadays to keep out of trouble and steer clear of the booze. This man’s navy shoves a fellow along pretty fast if he shows ambition and is steady-gaited.”

“Be that as it may,” croaked Martin Delaney, “an’ hurroo for a grape-juice navy that is always pesterin’ men about their moral welfare, but ye cannot convince me, Jerry, that a self-respectin’ sailor should come aboard sober from a liberty party. ’T is ag’in’ th’ traditions of the Service.”

Jerry disputed until supper intervened to suspend the argument. He had been granted permission to spend the evening ashore and expected to enjoy himself in his innocent way at the bluejackets’ club. When he landed at the naval pier with a boat-load of his shipmates, the streets were gloomy with the early darkness of a sodden sky. It was Queenstown weather, mist and drizzle, and mud underfoot. Jerry Harmstead was not fond of the town. It depressed his spirits, and the sight of so many loafing young Irishmen who should have been fighting in France always ruffled his temper.

He was strolling along with several of his friends from the destroyer when Martin Delaney overtook them and linked his arm in Jerry’s. These two dropped behind, for the pavement was narrow, and the quartermaster exclaimed in that husky, deep-sea voice of his:

"What with a lad from the Navy patrol at ivery corner an' a billy in his fist, there is small chance for diversion. They will smother a good man before he can start annything. Niver ye mind, Jerry. Stick by me. 'T is an invitation. We will be seein' life."

"Better blow into the club with me," advised the ordinary seaman. "It's the night for the band from the flagship. And I'll set up the pie and ice cream and we can have a game of checkers."

The quartermaster halted with his hands on his hips and laughed good-humoredly. Jerry flushed and felt excessively young and callow. With the air of one imparting words of precious wisdom, old Martin Delaney replied:

"The real gobs pass it up. Nix on the club stuff. Ice cream an' checkers, an' a bum brass-band of amachoor wind-jammers! You're me personal guest for to-night, boy. A little back room an' three or four of my pals, petty officers that grew up in this man's navy."

To the ingenuous Jerry there was magic in the phrase, "a real gob." Destroyer service in the war zone was adventurous enough, but most of his friends were boys like himself who had enlisted from the college or the farm or the shop. Pleased that Delaney should care to admit him to the fraternity of the little back room, he accepted the invitation. Presently they turned into a narrow, very dirty alley whose rutted flagging climbed the hillside at crazy angles. The quartermaster entered a public house and heartily greeted the young woman behind the

bar. She was a slatternly, red-faced creature, and Jerry felt sorry for her.

The small room beyond was more cheerful, with a coal fire blazing in the grate in front of which sat a machinist's mate and a coxswain of the American Navy, men somewhat younger than Martin Delaney, but wearing the "hash bars" of several enlistments. They shook hands with Jerry Harmstead and promptly shouted for drinks. He decided to try a bottle of stout. This appeared to be the quartermaster's favorite tippie and he recommended it as soothing and nutritious. Jerry sipped his glass and listened while they yarned of this ship or that cruise. It was very interesting, but the room had a musty flavor and reeked of stale beer. The seasoned sailor-men puffed at cigars that were strong and bad, and Jerry beheld them through a fog of smoke which made him cough.

It was the foul air, no doubt, which caused his head to buzz, so when the blowzy barmaid answered the next summons, he took another bottle of stout to steady him. It might be a nutritious beverage and likewise mild in the sight of Martin Delaney, but Jerry's eyes began to shine and he lost his diffidence. He talked easily. The sound of his own voice charmed him. As a chaperon the quartermaster exclaimed, with a touch of pride:

"Loosenin' up a bit, Jerry, me boy? 'T is the sociability of it. Ye will sing us a song after we drink another round of th' same."

Jerry was glad to oblige. When he stood up the

room seemed to sway and dip a trifle, but you often had that feeling ashore after a week's trip on convoy duty in a bucking destroyer. Glass in hand, he rolled out a verse of the flotilla song, astonished to find that he had a really splendid baritone voice:

“Talk about your battleships, cruisers, scouts, and all;
Talk about your Fritzers who are aiming for a fall;
Talk about your Coast Guard, it's brave they have to be,
But old Bill Sims' Flotilla is the terror of the sea.”

Delaney pounded the table, and the coxswain swore they ought to make a quartet of it and tear off some close harmony. This was the life, loudly declared Jerry, who had a corking story to tell about his winning touch-down on the high-school football team, but there was a girl mixed in it — she was a pippin — a wonder — and he had kissed her good-bye when he enlisted, and since then she had written him that she liked another fellow better — and Jerry's voice broke, for he was deeply affected, and the story wandered until it ended in another bottle of stout.

The audience seemed to lack sympathy. The machinist's mate grinned and insisted upon spinning a long narrative which involved the police of Honolulu. Jerry was in a sensitive mood. As a guest he could not pick a quarrel, so he drifted out to the bar to confide in the ripened damsel who pulled the taps. Earlier in the evening he had thought her fat, shabby, and forlorn. Now he perceived that she was kind-hearted, even charming. His gaze wavered oddly, but he managed to keep her in focus as he murmured:

“Irish eyes of blue! And a cheek like the dawn of day, my dear. Tell me something. Are you a Sinn-Feiner?”

Her smile was jolly and honest as she answered:

“Shure, you have no lack of cheek yourself! Away wid your blarney. An’ wud I be a Sinn-Feiner — me that has one brother in the Irish Guards an’ another wan dead in Flanders? Go back to your ship, that’s the good boy. You are stout enough an’ have no need for it in bottles.”

“Thanks, Molly darling, but I am seeing life,” Jerry assured her, with a great deal of feeling. “Behold a real gob, and the night is still young. Trip into the back room and take the orders, if you please. The machinist’s mate insulted me, but I can’t refuse him a drink. Did you notice his ugly mug? I think he’s a Sinn-Feiner.”

A roar from the thirsty back room called Molly darling in haste. Jerry Harmstead, ordinary seaman, considered himself scorned and neglected by all hands. Even those Irish eyes of blue shone not for him. A tear trickled down his nose and he became embittered. The real gobs had no more use for him. They had laughed at his broken heart. He did not wish to see them again. He wandered outside, the flat cap jammed low on his brow, and stood frowning at the alley, which was dark and wet. The easiest direction to steer was downhill, and he moved at what is known as a rolling gait in the direction of the waterfront.

Sadly he came to the irregular open square or mar-

ket-place, passing a Navy patrol who eyed him attentively and observed that he was making fairly good weather of it. A crowd was gathering and the street lights made a shadowy illumination. Jerry Harmstead advanced and halted, blinking at the spectacle. A hundred Irishmen were jostling into parade formation while an orator declaimed from the curb. The embers of a bonfire glowed in the square. A banner of some sort was carried at the head of the column. There seemed to be a guard or escort of young men who wore green uniforms. They fell in smartly and showed the results of drill.

To Jerry Harmstead's listening ear came the orator's final appeal. There was something about brutal jailers and a hunger strike and the Dublin martyrs and their righteous cause — at which the crowd cheered for the martyrs and groaned at mention of the British despotism that held Ireland in chains. Now the right and wrong of the Irish question was too deep for Jerry Harmstead, ordinary seaman of a destroyer's crew, but he had heard his own flag cursed by men who hoped Germany would win the war. He had been nursing a grudge against all Sinn-Feiners, and here they were, flaunting their banner, led by their own soldiers. Jerry was fighting hand in hand with the British Navy and he took the alliance seriously.

The Dublin martyrs might fire the hearts of these Queenstown rebels, but several bottles of Dublin stout were seething beneath the blouse of a lone American bluejacket. Earnestly he said to himself:

“Josephus Daniels and Vice-Admiral ‘Bill’ Sims expect every man to do his duty. That’s a hostile dem-demonstration, sure as you live. Right here is where I bust it up.”

The odds were somewhat disturbing, but a “real gob” never hesitated for a little thing like that. The mood of Jerry was grandly heroic. With a whoop of defiance he galloped into the square and made straight for that irritating green banner. Things happened immediately thereafter. There were one hundred and eighty pounds of Jerry, and although clumsy he was not soft. And an Irish riot was very much like plunging through an opposing football team with five yards to gain. The banner went down and Jerry clutched the splintered pole. He swung it ardently. His object was twofold, to break up the parade and to crack the head of the orator who had tactlessly referred to the American sailors as vultures and vampires. Jerry seemed in a fair way to succeed. He bowled the orator off his pins, mowed a swath among the green uniforms, and converted the parade into a ruction. His arrival was as abrupt as that of an explosive shell and the enemy were taken utterly by surprise. They soon rallied, however, and the tide turned against Jerry. Something hard hit him behind the ear and he dropped. Scrambling to his feet, he butted a portly Sinn-Feiner in the stomach and tried to get room to use his fists.

The disturbance naturally attracted attention. The peaceful night was shattered by the war-cries of Jerry and the curses of the annoyed Irish celebrants.

The American Navy patrols mobilized at the double-quick, but an awkward problem confronted them. They desired to extricate the obstreperous bluejacket and put him under arrest, but they had received strict orders not to molest the town's-people. How to pluck Jerry out of the scrimmage without hurting a few Sinn-Feiners was a puzzle. It was a job for the Royal Irish Constabulary. These officers of the law were a bit tardy, but presently a sergeant and six men came down the hill from the barracks and paused to discover what it was all about.

Just then there bolted from a dingy pub in an alley near by three seasoned petty officers, and Martin Delaney, quartermaster, led the charge. The word had been passed to the little back room that one American bluejacket was putting up a gorgeous scrap down in the square. It was an S.O.S. call, as Delaney read it, and the coxswain and the machinist's mate instantly agreed with him. They surged past the Royal Constabulary and joyously ploughed into the mob. Queenstown was a regular town after all. At last it was worth a man's time to hit the beach.

These were old hands at the game of knock-down-and-drag-out. Even an Irish mob had to regard them with respect. In their salad days they had mopped up notorious joints from the Bowery to the Ratcliffe Road. Occupied as he was in leading with left and right, Martin Delaney was able to recognize in the solitary champion none other than his youthful protégé, Jerry Harmstead. It was with fatherly pride that the quartermaster bellowed:

“Carry on, me boy! You are seein’ life. A real gob! What did I tell ye?”

Alas, the entertainment was snuffed out by the concerted action of the Royal Constabulary and the American Navy patrol. They moved in force and sorted the combatants, bluejacket and Sinn-Feiner. Jerry Harmstead was led out by the collar, the wreck of a trim young seaman of the flotilla. He was sobered and downcast, already of the opinion that the manners and habits of the new Navy had much to be said in their favor. Martin Delaney and the other two armored cruisers took it as philosophers and were unperturbed. If they were to be punished for sailing in to help a shipmate in distress, then so much the worse for the regulations.

Instead of being escorted aboard ship they were locked up in a warehouse which was used as a temporary brig. Jerry was too good a sportsman to blame his companions for his misfortune, but he bitterly regretted straying from the paths of virtue. They tried to console him, but their accents were drowsy, and all three were soon snoring, their slumber as sweet and untroubled as that of innocent children. Jerry sat and rubbed his bruises or held his aching head until he, too, slept the sleep of weariness.

Early next morning a master-at-arms gruffly roused them and sent them off to their respective destroyers with an armed guard. This was an open disgrace which made Jerry Harmstead hang his head with shame. Even the destroyer’s fox terrier barked at him in a hostile manner. The men of his own divi-

sion could have been no more surprised if the fleet chaplain had been clapped in irons. Jerry, the model of behavior, had toppled with a crash. He looked it. There was no alibi for him. The watch officer ordered him below to clean up and shift his tattered uniform. He would be confined until the commander held mast and decided whether or not he was to be sent aboard the flagship for court-martial. Breakfast held no charm for Jerry. He had never supposed that a man could be so profoundly unhappy in mind, soul, and body.

When he was marched forward for judgment, the skipper of the destroyer did not appear as ferocious as the culprit had feared. He was an impetuous officer with a square jaw and a twinkling eye and his crew thought the world of him. There were two German submarines to his credit, one of which he had rammed and cut in two. He paced the deck, his hands clasped behind him, while the actors in the lawless episode were lined up in a row. The men of the Navy patrol recited their testimony, identifying Jerry Harmstead and giving it as their opinion that he had been drinking.

“He was creating a disturbance, fighting, and all that?” queried the commander.

“A disturbance, sir?” responded the Navy witness, who was redheaded and Irish. “He was a knock-out! If he put the fear o’ God into one of them damn Sinn-Feiners he did it to a dozen of ’em, sir. Too bad you missed such an illigant —”

“Here, enough of that,” was the stern interrup-

tion. "This is a serious offense. You men have been given special instructions to avoid friction with the people of Queenstown. You are forbidden to meddle in their affairs. I like the Sinn-Fein no more than you do, but dislike is not an excuse for assault and battery. Such an affair as this mars the fine record of the American Navy in Ireland. What have you to say for yourself, Harmstead?"

Jerry hung his head and nervously rubbed the painful lump behind his ear.

"Nothing much, sir," he answered, looking up to meet the commander's searching glance in which there was a gleam of friendliness. "I never took a drink before in my life, and I guess it went to my head. I got sorrowful and then mad, I remember, and the sight of those Sinn-Feiners touched me off. I blew up, sir."

"Um-m, the first mark against your record. Too bad," said the commander, glancing at a paper handed him by a yeoman. "I can't overlook it."

"If you please, sorr," came the hoarse accents of Martin Delaney as he stepped forward and saluted, "this boy is a good guy. It was my fault entirely, an' I always take me medicine, as you know, sorr. He was on the proper course for the Sailors' Club at standard speed when I enticed him to come along wid me. Bein' a man so much older than him, he thought it disrespectful to refuse. An' it was me that coaxed th' booze into the lad, tho' God knows I niver suspected that three or four or six bottles of stout 'ud twist his compass bearings as bad as all that. 'T was no more

than enough to give me a thirst, sorr. If ye will tack his sentence onto mine I will serve the both of thim with pleasure."

"I wanted to be a real gob," faltered Jerry, with a ghost of a smile.

"Are you cured of that ambition?" asked the commander.

"Goodness gracious, yes, sir. It does n't agree with me at all."

"I believe you. The quartermaster shows a manly spirit, but it cannot extenuate you, Harmstead. You have to stand on your own two feet in the Navy. Your liberty will probably be stopped for thirty days and ten dollars deducted from your pay by a deck court. This is not a final verdict. It is subject to revision aboard the flagship in the event of a complaint from the civil authorities of Queenstown. This ship goes to sea this afternoon and your division is short-handed. So I shall take you along and deliver you, if so ordered, when we return to port."

The verdict was surprisingly lenient, but Jerry regarded it as a suspended sentence, with the worst to come. Dejectedly he moved aft while the commander scowled at Martin Delaney and said:

"The same for you. I presume you know what to expect."

"Yes, sorr. Thirty an' ten. I have heard thim sad words before. Thank you kindly, an' 't is me determination to eat checkers an' play ice cream at the club foriver hereafter. I am not the man I was an' me main-top is full of bats this mornin'."

The commander dismissed him and went into the ward-room to think of this pair of offenders less harshly than if they had tried to evade the truth and the consequences. Jerry Harmstead cleaned brass-work and paint until noon, but was not as active as usual. His friends endeavored to cheer him, but he could not be comforted. They seemed to consider him a hero instead of a criminal, and agreed that when it came to showing the Sinn-Feiners where they got off, Jerry was a human depth bomb. There was talk of matching him for a ten-round bout against the heavyweight champion of a British cruiser then in port. In a bad temper Jerry declined the honor and asked them to let him alone.

All he could see and think of was that his ambition of being rated as a petty officer had been blighted and his record was no longer clean and satisfactory. Worse than this was the suspense and uncertainty which hung over him like a black cloud. A general court-martial might send him home to serve a term in a naval prison. Jerry suffered so because he was only seventeen. Life had been a lark. It was now somber, tragic, and intense.

The destroyer slipped out to sea late in the afternoon, running alone instead of with a division on convoy duty. A rumor filtered from the ward-room that she was bound on some special service — “hush stuff” — and might make for one of the Channel ports. The wind was blowing half a gale as she passed through the gate of the netted barrier that protected the harbor and poked a sharp nose into the seas

which frothed outside the headlands. It was to the credit of the flotilla that not a ship had delayed or run for shelter because of bad weather during the months of stormy service in the war zone. The destroyers went about their business and the crew hung on by the eyelids.

The night was impenetrably black, and the vessel, which was seemingly so fragile and yet so immensely tenacious, drove into it showing never a glimmer of light. Other ships might be near, and they were also shrouded, but the continual risk of collision was part of the desperate game they played. The destroyer did not ride the huge seas which rose as the wind increased, but sheared through them. Her hatches were securely fastened. She was sealed like a bottle. Speed was reduced to twelve knots, but the thundering impact of the seas shook the hull in a succession of jarring and tremulous vibrations. The crew felt no alarm, merely a wretched discomfort, but this had become habitual and they took it for granted.

Jerry Harmstead turned out at midnight to stand a four-hour watch. He wore a life-belt, of course, and was scrambling into his boots and slicker while the boatswain's mate was still exhorting the others to show a leg. It was impossible to live on the open deck or to remain at the gun stations. During such a wild night as this the men of the watch clawed their way forward to the lee of the superstructure and crowded into the alley leading to the ward-room or clung to the stairs beneath the bridge.

Climbing out of the after hatch, which was some-

what sheltered, Jerry cautiously groped along, hanging fast to whatever he could lay his hands on while the flying water drenched him and the wind choked his breath. He felt safer when he gripped the life-line rigged across the open space between the funnels and the quarters forward. Hand over fist he laboriously advanced, unable to see, but sensing by the feel of the vessel when a big sea was about to tumble aboard. He had almost traversed the distance when the buffeted destroyer, steaming dead into it, yawed like a runaway horse and took a mighty comber over the starboard side. She rolled far down as if unable to right herself, gallantly recovered, and swung again into the teeth of the storm.

The roaring flood plucked Jerry Harmstead from the life-line. It was like shaking an apple from a twig. He was washed off into the clamorous darkness without touching the deck. If he cried out, nobody heard him. He was not even missed until the other men of the watch had gained shelter. Nothing could be done to search for or save him. All they could do was to mourn him and feel sorry for the folks at home. It would be hard breaking the news to old Martin Delaney when he turned out of his bunk.

Meanwhile the unfortunate Jerry was fighting for survival in the midst of a black and furious ocean. His cork jacket was so buoyant that there was no danger of sinking. In this season of early autumn the water was not chill enough to benumb him for some time. He was splendidly vigorous and not at all resigned to the notion of drowning. It was a question

of remaining alive until daylight, which might bring the hope of salvation. The toppling seas and the gusts of spray were trying to suffocate him, but he held his breath or gulped for air and was cruelly battered but not overwhelmed. Without doubt he was seeing life, and the words absurdly reëchoed in his mind.

Long before the merciful dawn began to break, the castaway was in a stupor of exhaustion and his blood was congealed with cold, but the desire of life had not been quenched, and the feeble, intermittent motion of his arms and legs, a subconscious instinct, enabled him to avoid submersion. The wind had diminished and the sea, although vastly swollen, was no longer confused and broken. Jerry swayed upon the hills of green water or slid down into the yeasty hollows as though he were riding a toboggan.

It was a British trawler that sighted him and almost passed him by as a dead seaman from some torpedoed merchant ship. Jerry drifted so close alongside, however, that the signs of life were unmistakable. At any rate, he looked bloomin' fresh for a corpse, in the opinion of the trawler skipper, and it was worth while trying to lower a boat even if it got stove up. At the first attempt the yawl was swamped, whereupon the skipper kicked off his boots and dived from the rail, the end of a coil of line between his teeth. He slid a bight under Jerry's arms and they were hauled aboard together with the aid of the winch.

The trawler-men rolled the water out of the derelict bluejacket, tucked him in a bunk, and proceeded to discuss him with lively interest.



JERRY DRIFTED SO CLOSE ALONGSIDE, HOWEVER, THAT THE SIGNS
OF LIFE WERE UNMISTAKABLE

"A Yank an' a good 'un," said the mate. "It's 'ands across the sea, what? He's lost 'is cap, so we can't get the name of the ship he was washed from."

"Trust him to be settin' up all merry an' bright before noon," observed the skipper. "Maybe he overstayed leave in one o' the American ports an' his ship sailed without him, so he swam across. I can't put him ashore from this perishin' trawler an' he'll have to make the best of it."

"A braw lad an' he'll nae refuse to bear a hand," put in the engineer, who hailed from Aberdeen. "Didna we lose a man oursel' when the Hun mine went bang an' a whizzin' bit of it slit poor Johnny Crisp's craw for him?"

When the braw lad opened his eyes and became dreamily conscious of his surroundings, the little cabin was wholly unfamiliar, and smelled so strongly of fish that he fancied he might be in that haven for the souls of sailor-men that is known as Davy Jones's locker. The sea was washing green against the bull's-eye window and the tramp of boots resounded overhead. The pulsations of the engine and the steady thump-thump of a crank shaft convinced Jerry Harmstead that he was not yet disembodied. Another proof of this was the fact that he felt stupendously hungry. He could have eaten those sea-boots, soles and all. There was in his memory a rather blurred picture of a night adrift in a cork jacket. It was with a sense of relief that he realized he was no longer aboard the destroyer. For the present, at

least, the fear of a general court-martial and prison was removed.

The trawler skipper halted in the doorway. His broad shoulders filled it. His seamed face was decorated with a fringe of gray whiskers which left the chin smooth-shaven. To Jerry he suggested a fatherly deacon who had passed his life on a New England farm. He wore the blue uniform of the Trawler Naval Reserve, and the double-breasted coat was buttoned across a chest that was as thick as a barrel. Swaying easily to meet the motion of the vessel, he sang out:

"Ahoy, Yank! What about tea and toast and a plate of kippered herrin'? In a manner of speakin' we fetched you back from a watery grave."

"I'm a thousand times obliged to you," weakly replied Jerry. "May I ask where I am and who you are?"

"Skipper Thomas Rawson, at your service," returned the mariner, ducking his head in what was meant for a bow. "Trawler *Rose of Old England* out o' Lowestoft, but now attached to the seventh Division of mine-sweepers with the Channel Patrol. We got blowed out to sea last night while answerin' a call from a steamer that was chased by a submarine."

"How soon will you be going into port?" was Jerry's anxious query.

"We came out only yesterday mornin', an' it means a week's trip, sweepin' a stretch of war channel all day an' lyin' at anchor by night. I'll show it to you on the chart when you buck up a bit."

Jerry meditated and ventured to remark:

"I can't ask you to run in just to set me ashore, Skipper. You have to get on with the war. I wonder if I'll be logged as a deserter?"

"Bless your eyes, you're logged as dead an' missin'," chuckled Thomas Rawson. "When you do turn up it'll be as a bleedin' ghost. You're welcome to share an' share alike with us, an' if I sight anything bound to Queenstown I'll signal 'em to take you aboard. I take it you're off a destroyer."

"Yes, sir; I went off last night, without permission," smiled Jerry.

For sixteen hours on end he slept in the bunk, waking several times to eat the rough and plenteous fare which the skipper or the cook carried in to him. Then he got into his clothes and went on deck. The mate beckoned him into the wheel-house, where he leaned against the ledge of an open window and gazed with curious interest at the little trawler and her consorts which were slowly moving in fleet formation. There were six of them, arranged in pairs. The *Rose of Old England* dragged a wire cable from a heavy framework at her stern, while her companion trawler, several hundred feet distant, trailed the other end of the sweep-wire. It sagged beneath the surface of the sea in a huge loop.

"Have you had any luck to-day?" Jerry asked the stalwart mate.

"Not to-day. I have 'opes. 'Tis about time for the dirty old Fritz to come a-creepin' over to lay 'is eggs in this bit of channel. Right about 'ere a traw-

ler bumped one last week an' went up with all hands. Fair blown to kindlin' she was. My sister's man was skipper of her."

"This *is* the life," murmured Jerry and just then the stanch *Rose of Old England* rocked and quivered as though in the throes of an earthquake. Midway between the pair of trawlers off to port the water spouted black and muddy in a column two hundred feet high and the roar of the detonation was like a thunder-clap. The mate shaded his eyes with his hand and stared as he said, in a matter-of-fact voice:

"There's one of 'em. The sweep-wire must ha' struck a horn of the beast. It saves the trouble of sinkin' it. No 'arm done."

"Some sporty game," was Jerry's verdict as he tried to appear as unperturbed as the trawler crew. "I won't feel bored or homesick if I have to stay out here a week or so."

"It's interestin' at times," agreed the mate.

Presently the sweep-wire tightened and tugged as a line rips through the water when a big fish is hooked. Skipper Thomas Rawson shouted to the engineer to slacken speed and bawled across to the companion trawler to hold steady and not drop astern.

"Unless we keep fair abreast when we grip a mine, it will slide along the wire to the one trawler or the other," he explained to Jerry, "an' it's very unhealthy to have 'em come too close."

The wire sawed through the mooring cable which

anchored the German mine to the bottom and there bobbed up a huge gray bulb that floated with its row of horns exposed. It was ugly, sinister, menacing. Jerry Harmstead eyed it with respect. His career in a destroyer had concerned itself more with torpedoes than with these monstrous devices which were strewn in ambush outside the British ports by prowling German submarines.

"What do you do with the blamed thing now you've got it?" he asked of the skipper.

"Shoot a hole in it. Take a shot yourself if you like." He placed a rifle in Jerry's hands. The crew waited expectantly. The Yanks were expert marksmen, no doubt, who had been trained to pot the red Indians that infested their villages. The blue-jacket squinted through the sights, pulled trigger, and drilled a hole in the great gray bulb of a mine. The air rushed out of the buoyancy chamber and the weight of the explosive charge and gear dragged the thing down. It vanished with a gurgle, and the canny Scot of an engineer remarked:

"Three hundred pound mair in gude money for Fritz to charge off to profit an' loss. A bonny eye with the rifle, eh, lad? Ye will earn your passage in the trawler."

This was precisely what Jerry intended to do. Idleness was intolerable. And he ardently admired these courageous North-Sea fishermen who had volunteered for this hard and hazardous toil. Moreover, they had saved his life and he could offer no other recompense than his own labor. He suggested it to

the skipper, who stubbornly declared that it was his only chance to entertain the American Navy and Jerry should loaf like a gentleman and tell them all about the war. Thereupon Jerry appealed to the mate, who admitted that he needed another hand at the after winch where the sweep-wire came in or was paid out on the revolving drums.

It was deft and delicate work, but the training of a destroyer-man had taught vigilance and a quick coördination of mind and muscle. Next morning Jerry took his station by the massive framework which overhung the stern like a squat derrick and helped to heave the kite over the side. This was a ponderous raft of weighted plank which slipped along the sweep-wire for a short distance and hung there, several feet under water, to keep the wire taut between the trawlers and at a depth which should drag up the anchored mines. Then the steam winch roared and rattled as the long wire slid through the sheaves and the companion trawler moved ahead with the other end of it fast aboard.

It proved to be a lucky day, with five mines fished up and destroyed and ten pounds reward from the Admiralty for each mine chalked up to the credit of the crew of the *Rose of Old England*. The skipper swore that Jerry should have his share of it, and the argument was so heated that the mate intervened as a peacemaker. The weather was rough and the seas slopped on deck, but the stanch steamer with her powerful shear had battled in the North Sea for years and this was no worse than hauling a trawl

on the Dogger Bank. Ten men there were of this valiant company, most of them out of Lowestoft and kinsmen by blood or marriage. They hated the Hun with a holy hatred because he had shelled their red-sailed smacks or run amuck among their drifters, killing right and left, boasting of victories over helpless fishermen, but turning tail at sight of the White Ensign of England's Navy. Jerry listened and clenched his fists. The depth bombs of the destroyer flotilla were the proper dose for Fritz.

It came to the last day's sweeping of the trawler's tour of duty. Jerry had learned the trade and liked it. He was standing by the winch with three of the crew when the skipper gave the order to reel in the wire and make ready to head for port. The steel drums revolved as the steam hissed in the engine valves. The dripping wire whined through the sheaves that hung over the stern. Jerry and a trawler-man leaned over to look for the kite or ponderous raft which was about to emerge with its gear. It was their task to hoist it over the bulwark and ease it down on deck.

One end of the kite lifted out of the water, swaying heavily. With it came a gray, bulbous object decorated with a row of metal horns. To Jerry's afrighted vision it looked as big as a balloon. He comprehended that the mine had become entangled with the short length of cable which held the kite in position. This fiendish contrivance of the Hun was about to bump the trawler's side or come aboard with the kite. Either way it meant death and de-

struction. Jerry's eyes popped out of his head. The winch was still winding in the wire and the kite and the mine together were steadily coming aboard. The crisis was a matter of seconds only. Jerry tried to yell a warning, but his mouth hung open and he merely gasped.

The trawler's hope of salvation was in stopping the winch. This was perfectly obvious to all concerned. An instantaneous calculation convinced the three men of the crew that it could n't possibly be done in time. The infernal egg of the Hun was coming aboard hell-bent, and nothing could prevent it. They were wise at the trade and had been blown up in other trawlers; wherefore they knew a thing or two. It was nothing against their courage, but they simultaneously concluded to take to their heels. It was panic, if you like, but there was a certain method in their rush toward the other end of the doomed trawler.

From a corner of his eye Jerry Harmstead, ordinary seaman, beheld this swift exodus. It was for him to do likewise, but his legs refused to obey the impulse. He was rooted to the deck. Inexorably the winch was hoisting the damnable mine nearer and nearer. He realized why his comrades had fled. To shut off steam and check the motion of the geared drums would require a certain amount of time. And there was not time enough to spare. Jerry gulped as he saw the iron-shod planking of the kite swing against the suspended mine with a metallic thump. Then they lurched toward the hull of the trawler.

He expected to soar skyward amid the fragments of the vessel, but it was the fat belly of the mine and not one of the sensitive horns which was in collision.

The situation resembled a nightmare in which whole chapters of horrors employ no more than a fleeting instant of actual time. Jerry awoke, emitted the yell which had stuck in his throat, and bounded for the winch. It was stupid to die without a final effort. He would go through the motions of stopping the machinery, at any rate, even if he and the winch should go to kingdom come together. He jerked the sliding rod which controlled the steam pressure, but the cogs and drums still rumbled on, turning over with their own momentum. He flung himself against the long brake lever with the fury of a young giant. The iron bands squealed as they bit the hubs of the drums. Jerry put his back into it and grimly hung on. He had no idea of letting go.

The massive winch came to a halt. The entangled mine was almost clear of the water, but it was not dragging against the trawler. There was a respite, until the crew could disengage the twisted cables and release the sociable mine which had insisted on paying a visit. Jerry sat down abruptly and felt inclined to weep, but this was so unmanly in a Yankee seaman of a dashing destroyer's crew that he was greatly chagrined. Skipper Rawson came trotting aft on those stout bow-legs of his and Jerry fancied that the gray whiskers were standing on end. Fairly hugging the lad with both arms, the old man blurted:

"Handsomely done! A jolly fine bit o' work. The blinkin' Hun all but did us in, what? The first time I ever saw a mine try to crawl aboard!"

"No bouquets, if you please, sir," said Jerry of the rueful countenance. "None of that boy-stood-on-the-burning-deck stuff. I did n't know any better, and I was too blamed scared to run."

"A modest Yank! I've heard different of 'em," quoth the skipper. "Do you hear that, Mr. Mac-Intosh? He was too scared to run."

"I dinna doot it," sagely observed the engineer. "I wud ha' been the same way mysel'. We will na blame the men for scamperin' awa'. 'Tis harrrd to get used to bein' blown up."

Sheepishly the crew of the winch stepped up to shake hands and murmur an awkward word or two of thanks before they climbed outboard to set free the mine and the kite gear. This was a perilous task, extraordinarily so, but they went at it with unflurried, deliberate method. They grinned at each other as though they had been victims of a practical joke. At Lowestoft and Grimsby and Yarmouth the trawler fleets would be chuckling over it for a month of Sundays. However, they were conscious of an exalted respect for the American Navy, and the *entente cordiale* was more firmly riveted.

When the *Rose of Old England* resumed the interrupted voyage into port, Jerry Harmstead became confidential in response to the skipper's affectionate persuasions. The ship's company was anxious to subscribe for a gift to the Yankee hero as a token

and a souvenir, a silver cup or a piece of plate suitably engraved. The mate had suggested it and the men were delighted. Jerry protested that he had only one desire in the world. There was a blot on his record with the destroyer flotilla. If Skipper Rawson and his men could help to wipe it out, Jerry's gratitude would be eternal.

When the *Rose of Old England* had found a berth inside the break-water among a score of other battered trawlers and drifters, Skipper Thomas Rawson changed into his black clothes, white shirt, and top hat, and ordered a boat. Jerry was invited to accompany him ashore. For the next hour the proceedings smacked of mystery. The skipper stumped hither and yon on various errands and Jerry was left to loiter at a hotel. Then the crew of the trawler appeared, to the last man, having discarded boots and jerseys for their very best rigs. A kilted piper appeared, arm-in-arm with the engineer, and played the party into a private dining-room.

Above the long table were draped the White Ensign and the Stars and Stripes. When Jerry was escorted to the seat of honor, he discovered a roll of parchment tied with a bit of bunting. He paused to read the few lines of script thereon and noted the blank space beneath:

We, the officers and men of H.M.S. Armed Trawler *Rose of Old England* do hereby most respectfully address this report to the senior officer commanding the American Naval Forces at Queenstown. While temporarily acting as seaman aboard this vessel, Jerry Harmstead did acquit himself with

great gallantry, saving the lives of the undersigned and one of His Majesty's ships from total destruction. It would please us if his service could be recognized as part of his record with the destroyer flotilla in European waters.

There were loud demands for a speech, but the Yankee bluejacket begged for time. One by one his trawler mates affixed their signatures to the precious document which Jerry tucked inside his blouse as though afraid of losing it. The dinner was in full tide when an officer of the Royal Navy, wearing the sleeve stripes of a commander, entered the room and the party clattered to its feet. He shook hands with Skipper Rawson, introduced himself to Jerry as the man in charge of the trawler base, and handed him an Admiralty envelope, explaining:

"I have signaled Queenstown that you are safe and sound. Here is your railway transportation and — er — a line to your captain. Please tell him for me that if he will lose a few more lads like you for us to pick up, I shall consider it a favor."

Two days later Jerry Harmstead stood on the naval pier and gazed at a group of American destroyers, gaily striped with dazzle paint, which nestled side by side at the mooring buoys. His own ship was there. Soon a motor dory floated up to the weedy staircase and the derelict seaman beheld in the cockpit the burly figure of Martin Delaney, that hard and hairy quartermaster of the old Navy.

"Me long-lost boy!" bellowed Martin, waving his cap. "And a real gob! The message came through. You have been seeing life."

"I tore off a chapter or two," admitted Jerry as he jumped into the boat. "Is the old man aboard? I have something to show him."

"He is that. And he is waitin' to see you, as fidgety as a hen."

"Go to it, Martin. I've been away long enough. Did they auction off my clothes and kit-bag?"

"As duly deceased and dead entirely, Jerry, me darlin'? Divil a bit of it. I would n't let 'em. 'T was me hunch that ye could n't be drowned as easy as all that."

The destroyer captain was pacing the deck when his ordinary seaman climbed aboard and saluted. Jerry waited not for ceremony, but hastily presented the roll of parchment. Carefully the captain scanned it and his bold features wore an expression of quizzical interest. His voice was cordial as he said:

"That is well worth keeping, Harmstead. I would n't mind winning such an honor myself. You turned the trick this time."

"Yes, sir, I was too scared to run," earnestly replied the hero. He hesitated, colored, and added imploringly: "Do I get soaked for a general court — about — about those Sinn-Feiners that I mussed up?"

"I am going aboard the flagship right away. I guess the indictment is quashed. You beat them to it."

"That's simply great, sir!" cried the beaming Jerry. "What about my record? I deserved what

you gave me, of course, but — but it means an awful lot to me to have a clean slate, and —”

“I don’t think your record will stand in the way of promotion,” smiled the destroyer captain. “I have decided to rate you as a gunner’s mate, third class.”

THE QUIET LIFE

SOBER and middle-aged was William Christian Blodgett, chief gunner's mate. Because he talked only when he had something to say he was regarded by the frivolous youth of the destroyer's crew as a wise guy. The thoughtful silences of William and his brief, deliberate comments conveyed an impression of common sense seasoned by varied experiences. He moved methodically within his own orbit and the chronometers in the chart-room were no more dependable. The Navy prizes such chief petty officers as worth their weight in gold. The hardships of winter weather on convoy duty in the wild Atlantic had wrung no complaints from William Blodgett. He had the toughened, wind-reddened look of the deep-water sailor in whom endurance has become a habit.

It was not until the fitful sunshine and the milder air came as the heralds of spring to the Irish coast that the doctor said to the commander, after dinner in the ward-room:

"This outfit of ours has stood the racket mighty well. The health record surprises me. Cramped quarters, bad air below, men wet half the time, I rather expected some sickness."

"They thrive on it," smiled the skipper. "I'll confess that I have lost twenty pounds and feel several years older than when I joined the flotilla,

but it's the responsibility of the job, I suppose. These blessed boys take it as it comes. It's a wonderful thing to be husky and twenty. 'A great life so long as you don't weaken,' is their motto."

"Right you are," agreed the doctor. "They can sleep standing on their heads, and they eat like wolves when this poor old destroyer is rolling her funnels under. Older men take it harder. The game is more apt to get hold of their nerves and —"

"That reminds me," the commander exclaimed. "You said something a few days ago about William Blodgett. I ought to have noticed it myself, perhaps, but the symptoms got by me. I have been keeping an eye on him since you tipped me off. He has begun to crack. No mistake about it."

"Oh, nothing very serious yet, if he has a chance to mend, but he really is n't fit to carry on. He will deny it, of course."

"Let me send for him," suggested the skipper. He rang for a messenger and added mournfully, "I hate to think of losing William, even for one cruise."

Five minutes later the chief gunner's mate answered the summons. He looked as fit as if he had bathed, shaved, and jumped into a freshly pressed uniform during this fleeting interval. There was about him an air of such solid strength and poise that one felt as though almost anything could be left to William. Cap in hand he stood at one end of the ward-room table, his honest features betraying a slight curiosity.

"Your enlistment expires this week, Blodgett," said the commander, with a friendly nod. "Going to sign on for another hitch?"

"Surest thing you know, sir. What else would I be doing?" was the serious answer.

"Bully! I'm glad to hear it. You have earned a vacation. Why not take it? I can arrange thirty days' leave for you. This won't give you time to go home to God's country, but you can stretch your legs ashore and loaf around a bit."

"But I'm not asking for liberty, sir," protested William in accents of surprise. "There's contentment enough in making life unhappy with Fritz."

"How old are you, Blodgett?" put in the doctor.

"Forty-six, sir. I came into the Navy late, after a good many years in the merchant service."

"Ah, yes. And how many hours' sleep do you average a night — say for the last month?"

The chief gunner's mate appeared confused, as if he had been caught unawares. Hesitating a moment, he replied:

"About three, I should think, sir, but I am always wide-awake on duty."

"I have seen you prowling and fidgeting on deck when you were off watch," chided the commander. "And when the galley door slammed just now you jumped as if a depth bomb had been let go. I'll take the doctor's word for it. What about a trip to London? If you are short of cash for a holiday, say the word and I'll be glad to lend —"

"I'm strong with the paymaster, sir," was

William's assurance. "There's quite a bundle to my credit. If this is an order, sir, I presume I'll have to go, although I feel as if I was shirking my duty."

"Better cheer up and make the best of it," advised the doctor. "You don't want to be sent home on your beam-ends as a nervous derelict. Beat it for somewhere and enjoy yourself. Forget you ever saw a destroyer. Have n't you a hobby of some sort?"

"Yes, sir. Farming! I subscribe to *The New England Homestead*, and it comes to me regular. I hope to own a farm some day. I'd enjoy rummagin' about the Irish country, come to think of it, and learning things. They know how to raise pigs, potatoes, and beef cattle."

"The quiet life for yours! Just the thing!" cried the doctor. "Go to it. You will come back ready to bite the periscopes off a U-boat."

"Good luck, Blodgett," said the skipper, shaking hands with his chief gunner's mate. "You can get away to-morrow, if you like."

William saluted and withdrew to the deck, where he said nothing about the kindly interest displayed by his officers. During these recent weeks he had become even more reticent than usual, fighting it out alone, weary for the sleep that pitifully eluded him, afraid of betraying to his comrades how near he was to giving way under some sudden tension. It seemed unmanly to admit that he needed a respite, and he resolved to steal away from the ship with no farewells. This was a forlorn, lonely way of setting out on a vacation, as William Christian Blodgett

realized when he had packed a bag and was set ashore at the naval pier in Queenstown. He felt like a fugitive as he walked in the direction of the railway station with no particular destination in mind.

The only train bound anywhere for several hours would carry him no farther than Cork. There were reasons why enlisted men and junior officers of the American Navy were forbidden to visit this famous city by the pleasant waters of the river Lee. It had been their earnest intention to make certain noisy Sinn-Feiners hard to find, but the admiral's edict interfered. The diversions of Cork were not for the sedate chief gunner's mate, who was loitering near the station in a low-spirited humor when he beheld a friend whom he did not have to avoid. This was a brisk little man of a sandy complexion who wore the uniform of a petty officer of the Royal Navy with a coxswain's badge on the sleeve. He, too, had a bag in his fist, and at sight of William Blodgett he exclaimed with a grin:

"What, ho, matey! Where to? Or are you sailin' with sealed orders for a secret base?"

"God knows, Parslow," was the cheerless reply. "I was kicked ashore for my health and I'm under orders to serve thirty days of the quiet life."

Coxswain James Parslow, of H.M.S. *Adventure*, sloop-of-war, surveyed the rugged Yankee sailor and his eye twinkled as he said:

"You're a perishin' invalid, you are, Blodgett. And what is your silly idea of a quiet life?"

"Farms and pigs and things. I like 'em," mildly explained the chief gunner's mate. "I shall investigate rural Ireland."

"In your blue uniform with the brass buttons?" sarcastically queried the coxswain. "Rural Ireland will jolly well pot you from behind a hedge. The natives of these parts make their own game laws."

"I am specially instructed to be careful of my nerves, Parslow," replied William Blodgett. "Your remarks don't listen right to me."

"Let us adjourn to the Three Shamrocks and discuss it," urged the coxswain. "A bit of bread and cheese and a pint o' beer will come handy. I'm on leave myself, a fortnight, to see the old girl in Merry England. Down in Norfolk, what? They can show you real farmin'! I say, Blodgett, come along with me. The allied naval forces stick together, and we'll bend the Stars and Stripes and the White Ensign on the same flag-hoist."

"Quiet and soothing, is it?" demanded the American.

"Bless your 'eart, they don't know there's a war," Parslow declared.

"You're on, though I never expected to be steam-in' off arm in arm with the Royal Navy," declaimed the chief gunner's mate. "It's any port in a storm."

Together they journeyed to Dublin and crossed by steamer to Holyhead. William's spirits were rising. His companion had assumed the rôle of nurse and guardian and seemed delighted with the task. When Blodgett drowsed and three Tommies in-

sisted on singing at the top of their voices, the faithful little coxswain informed them that he would knock the block off any bloke that could n't stow his lip and behave 'isself like a gentleman.

"This Yank grabbed a German submarine and choked it to death with his bare hands," he was kind enough to explain. "He needs a rest and I'm 'ere to see that he gets it."

They sat up all night in a crowded compartment of the train for London and tumbled out to find the nearest hotel. It was not open for guests, however, because a bomb from a German airplane had smashed it a few hours earlier. The front of the building had tumbled into the street which was blocked with vast heaps of *débris*. Cordons of police held back the curious crowds and the brass-helmeted firemen were digging the bodies of women and children out of the ruins. Coxswain Parslow muttered a curse between his teeth and said:

"The murderin' swine! They must be proud o' that bit of work. You and I will have to find another moorin' buoy. They made a proper job of that unfortunate hotel. We'll spend a couple of days in London town and do the bally concert halls."

William Blodgett seemed bedazed. He had seen nothing like this wicked slaying of innocent people, this blind, insensate demolition. A bystander said, with a laugh:

"A full moon to-night, and the blighters will be flying over again to drop more pills. They're sure to come in weather like this."

The chief gunner's mate shivered. A sense of fear gripped him and he was unable to shake it off. Sleep? He could never find sleep in London with this memory to haunt him. Now he realized that his nerves were indeed unstrung, that his vital forces had ebbed. Almost piteously he implored the coxswain:

"I want to lay a course for Norfolk where you say it's so quiet. Stay if you like. Don't mind me. But I've got enough of London, understand?"

"Fed up already?" was the sympathetic response. "I can't blame you none. I was merely suggestin' a spree. It's all the same to me, matey. We'll hook up and resume the voyage after breakfast."

William suffered himself to be led in tow, reflecting that he much preferred risking a torpedo in the open sea to this dastardly game of the Hun. He was not in the least concerned for the safety of his own skin. A man with the destroyer flotilla learned to forget such trifles as life and death, but it was not good for tired nerves to dwell with the horrors which menaced other wives and kiddies in this swarming London. Coxswain James Parslow perceived that his friend was unhappy, and he was therefore moved to suggest:

"I tell you what, Blodgett. We'll lay over at Ramswick on the way down. It's an East Coast naval base, do you see, where I was stationed for the first two years of this bleedin' war. There's pals of mine in every ship and they'll give you a welcome that'll warm the cockles of your heart. Trust me to pass the word to keep it all quiet and soothin'."

This appealed to the chief gunner's mate as a pleasant diversion. What he most needed was a change from his own rigorous routine, and after a sociable visit with the lime-juicers he could proceed on his course to study cows, cabbages, and pigs.

"Harkee, Jim, no violence," he replied in his measured manner. "You know what the instructions are. It's a great navy you have, but prohibition has passed it by. And it would not be good for my symptoms to get soused to the neck."

"Leave it to me, old top," declared the kindly coxswain. "I'll handle you as careful as a basket of eggs. In a manner of speakin' this is convoy duty for me and as your naval escort I'm bound to fetch you clear of mines and torpedoes."

They returned to the railway station an hour later and elbowed through the crowds which had gathered to meet an infantry battalion bound for the front. William paid for his ticket from a wad of crumpled pound notes which he fished from a pocket and was unaware that financial disaster had overtaken him until the train had left London far behind. Then he happened to feel for the leather wallet which had been tucked inside the double-breasted coat. It was not there. With it had vanished the considerable amount of cash which he had drawn from the paymaster. A pickpocket had shown no respect for the uniform of the American Navy. Sadly William Blodgett stared through the window at the lovely English landscape and wondered what he could do with thirty days' leave.

The money left in his clothes would not even carry him back to Queenstown. He had no intention of sponging on the British Navy. The honor of his own service compelled him to stand on his own two feet and pay his share as he went. The thought of letting word of his plight get back to the flotilla was intolerable. He would never hear the last of it. Those godless youngsters of his own destroyer would insist that William Christian Blodgett, pattern of propriety and an example for all flighty bluejackets, had embarked on a solitary toot and was sending out S.O.S. calls. In short, he would be slandered as a dis-solute gob of the old school.

Now verging on melancholia, the chief gunner's mate was such very dismal company that Coxswain James Parslow wondered if he had not undertaken a task that might prove too much for him. Perhaps poor old Blodgett was a bit cracked in the maintop. When it took a turn like this a man might get an odd notion of hanging himself or using a razor on his windpipe. The thing was to humor him and hope for a fair breeze.

Before noon they came to a harbor and a long pier facing the gray North Sea. Battered trawlers with mine-sweeping gear aboard were anchored in flocks. Divisions of rakish destroyers rode in column. A squadron of swift light cruisers seemed ready to swoop seaward at an hour's notice. William Blodgett brightened perceptibly and seemed to take some interest in life.

"The minute you wandered inland you felt

miserable," was the verdict of Coxswain Parslow. "That's what's the matter, Bill. This fancy for farmin' and such is all in my eye. Sailor-men is full of them queer theories. Stand by, and we'll take the bloomin' British Navy to pieces and see what makes it tick."

They wandered along the pier and William's professional eye kindled with animation, but he could not forget his financial tragedy. He was stranded far from his own port and people and he dared not return to them inside of thirty days. At the head of the pier was a rusty, wall-sided cargo steamer flying the red duster. She was a British tramp such as wanders over the Seven Seas. Amid these fleets of naval vessels, so trim, alert, and smartly manned, she appeared forlornly uncouth. A few of her crew idled on deck or shoved boxes of stores down the gangway. They, too, were unkempt in grimy dungarees and patched sweaters. They belonged with such a ship as this.

Coxswain Parslow halted to chat with a Navy man who had some errand on the pier and asked him a question about the ocean tramp.

"Broke down outside and a destroyer towed her in for temporary repairs. Bound to some French port with timber for trench props. She'll be sailing to-night."

"Plucky beggars — nothing wrong with British merchant seamen," was the coxswain's eulogy.

"Right-o! And this old hooker is short-handed at that. But she'll kick along just the same, and Fritz be blowed."

William Blodgett was listening with an expression of eager attention. The idea once grasped, his methodical mind was working out the details. It offered an escape from his difficulties and solved the tormenting problem. Twenty years in the merchant service would make him a handy man aboard any steamer. In fact, he had sailed as mate of better vessels than this sorry-looking water-bruise. Grasping the coxswain by the arm, he exclaimed:

"Short-handed, did he say? That looks good to me, Jim. If it's a round trip to France she ought to do it well inside thirty days."

"My Gawd, Blodgett, but you have gone balmy!" cried the bewildered guardian. "What about the quiet life?"

"There it is," and William waved a hand at the cargo boat. "You loaf along at seven or eight knots, and you don't get all mixed up with drill and discipline and general alarms and depth bombs and such truck. You wear ragged pants and smoke your pipe and shave once a week."

"But you raved about farmin', you silly ass," was the reproachful retort.

"I guess I'm homesick out of sight of salt-water," plaintively argued William.

"Huh! Somebody forgot to lock the padded cell when you escaped from that giddy destroyer of yours." James Parslow paused to cogitate. He removed his cap and ran his fingers through his sandy hair. This wandering Yank was afflicted with bats in the conning tower. It was wise to humor him.

"If you don't mind steppin' aboard, Jim, and puttin' it up to the skipper," ventured William. "I'll have to be vouched for, of course."

"Glad to oblige," heartily exclaimed the coxswain. "You wait here and I'll arrange this little matter."

He advanced at his brisk gait, and was permitted to pass by the Royal Marines who were doing sentry duty at the head of the pier. William Christian Blodgett sat himself down upon a bollard and foresaw a pleasant, restful vacation, also a month's wages in his pocket. The risk of being blown to glory by a torpedo entered not into his calculations. This had never cost him any sleep in the destroyer service. The strain was in keeping the ship and the crew at the fighting edge, every moment of the day and night. This blessed old tramp would take her luck as it came. William was actually whistling when the coxswain trotted back to inform him:

"I recommended you 'ighly, Bill, and the skipper says he'll take you on. Report aboard at six o'clock to-night. What now?"

"Steer me to a slop-shop and an outfit of old duds. Then some slumber! I can pound my ear like an infant."

"Then it's good-bye and good luck to you, shipmate," said the coxswain. "Mind you now — I've tried to please you, Blodgett, for the sake of the allied navies. Give a man what he asks for, says I. You insist on surgin' off to sea in this filthy old tub and if she drowns you, don't blame me."

"The quiet life, Parslow," smiled William Blod-

gett. "Look me up in Queenstown. I'm feeling fifty per cent better already."

The afternoon had waned when the chief gunner's mate rolled out of bed in a waterside tavern and inserted himself into the nondescript garments of a merchant seaman. He felt easy, relaxed, like a slackened hawser that had been stretched too taut. His gait was slouchy and his hands were in his pockets as he passed into the street. A few more purchases, oilskins, a sou'wester, and a tin of tobacco, and he went to the pier. Evidently the sentries recognized him, for he was not asked to show a pass.

The steamer was taking on coal from a barge alongside and the black dust covered her decks. She was more disreputable than ever. A sooty seaman jerked a thumb over his shoulder to indicate the skipper's cabin and Blodgett clambered to the superstructure. He knocked at the door and a strong voice bade him enter. William was somewhat surprised at confronting a man much younger than himself who conveyed an impression of clean-cut efficiency. Something wrong with his record, shrewdly reflected the American sailor, or he would be holding a better berth than this. A man of education, too, as his voice and manner disclosed.

"Glad to have you aboard, Blodgett," said he. "Your friend, the coxswain, told me who you were. It is a trifle irregular, perhaps, and the Seaman's Union might object. If agreeable to you I will rate you second mate. The steward will show you a room and I fancy you'll want some supper."

This gentlemanly welcome was unexpected. William thanked him and backed out of the cabin, but delayed to ponder before seeking the steward. The Britishers were a fine lot, in his opinion, but not as sharp-witted as their American cousins. They were carelessly good-natured, ready to believe the best of everybody. Now a man with half an eye could see that this youthful, keen, and decisive skipper was out of place in a dingy cargo tramp. His crisply modulated speech had been acquired elsewhere. It was what a German naval officer might have picked up by careful study. And it was an audacious trick, well worth trying, to have a breakdown in the engine-room while outside this important East Coast base of the British Navy and be towed right in among the fleet for purposes of observation. The crew might pass as Scandinavians and the like.

"And I drift along most convenient," said William to himself, "and he jumps at the chance to take me on for a voyage so he can extract what I know about the American naval forces in the war zone. Fine business! I'll get better acquainted with this bird."

So much for the sagacious deductions of William. They were somewhat upset when he met the other officers at the supper-table. English they were to a man, a gray-whiskered chief engineer, a bald, jovial first officer, three younger assistants who laughed at very simple jests and chatted among themselves. Two passengers came aboard before the meal was finished. They had persuaded the owner's agent in London to let them cross to the French port and so

avoid a tedious *détour* by rail *via* Paris. An elderly man and his wife, they had a quaint, old-fashioned aspect, reminding Blodgett of worthy couples who drove to New England meeting-houses on Sunday morning behind old Dobbin. He saw them again on deck, in the dusk, as the steamer sailed, father with a gray shawl pulled around his stooping shoulders, mother wearing a small round bonnet and a green veil.

By now William had learned the name of his ship, the *West Wales*, and that her port of destination was Brest. A roundabout way to carry timber for the trenches, he reflected, but it was proper for a vessel to keep her business to herself in war-time. He joined the captain on the bridge and showed at once that he was competent to stand watch. His faith in the German spy theory was already shaken, but his perplexity was increased, nevertheless. For a short-handed ship the *West Wales* carried an amazingly large crew. They had not been visible when she lay at the pier, all these extra hands who were now busied about the decks, hatches, and winches. And there was an odd abundance of officers, or such seemed to be the men who appeared on the bridge from time to time. William was certain that he had failed to meet several of them at the supper-table. Why, then, had he been so cordially greeted as filling a vacant berth?

Silently tramping to and fro, the chief gunner's mate had a glimmer of comprehension, for he was no fool. He slapped his knee and laughed aloud. It was a chuckle so deep and hearty and enjoyable that he seemed to fetch it all the way up from his boots. All

traces of melancholia had vanished. The joke was on him. The quiet life! Coxswain James Parslow, the little scoundrel, had put one over on him. However, he seemed to bear his faithless guardian no ill-will.

"Parslow was trying to humor me," murmured William, "and he did all of that. You could n't call this just what the doctor advised, but I surely do feel better already."

The mirthful monologue seemed to interest the captain of the *West Wales*, who moved to the wing of the bridge and inquired:

"Are we discovered? It's too late to set you ashore, I fear, but I hope you're going to like the voyage."

"Like it, sir?" echoed the Yankee pilgrim. "I've been eating my heart out for a fling at it ever since we first based at Queenstown. The 'hush stuff' used to pass around among our boys, and we heard all about the stunts of Commander Hobbs-Seymour and Captain Arthur Scott —"

"My name is Arthur Scott," was the quiet reply, spoken with a shade of diffidence. He laughed in his turn as he went on to say: "Coxswain Parslow and I were shipmates several years ago. As soon as he had told me what you wanted, I signaled the Admiralty for permission to give you a rating. Your own naval headquarters in London was consulted, I presume. At any rate, there was no trouble. They think it useful to have you see how we do this sort of thing. You will be asked to make a report on it, I imagine."

"Thank you, sir," said William Blodgett, who found it hard to untangle his emotions. "Was any-

thing said, if you please, about me being a nervous derelict? The doctor called me names as bad as that and told me to beat it for scenery that was restful and soothing."

"Your health was n't mentioned. This may turn out to be rather entertaining, don't you know. Things have been so dull for the last month that we're due for a shindy."

"But those two passengers," protested Henry. "It don't seem right to bunco them. They would n't have come if they were wise to the ship."

"Please treat the lady with the utmost courtesy," replied Captain Arthur Scott. "She is very sensitive and refined."

"*I am* a prize boob," spluttered the chief gunner's mate. "The old bean is on a dead center to-night."

The elderly passengers were strolling on deck before breakfast next morning. Mother wore the green veil and clung to the arm of her devoted consort who held a tattered parasol above her head. It was most shocking, but after a brief promenade mother strode to the rail, raised the veil with a very large hand encased in a cotton glove, and shifted her quid as she spat a stream of amber juice over the side.

"Naughty, naughty!" scolded the first officer as he paused in passing. "And damned unladylike, besides. Look here, Wilkinson, if you can't remember your manners I'll send you back to the galley and set you to peeling spuds, you vulgar, dissolute son of a sea-cook."

"I have labored with Maria," quavered the elderly

husband, clutching his hoary false whiskers, "but she chews and swears and drinks rum. I shall divorce the hussy."

The *West Wales* was steering down Channel, alone and unprotected, easy mark for a prowling submarine. One small gun was mounted far aft, in the manner of British merchantmen, but it could offer only a futile defense. Her plodding gait could not be hurried. Once a friendly destroyer, bound the same way, veered close to hail the bridge and ask questions. The extra men of the *West Wales's* crew had vanished below decks. She was merely a tramp thrashing along to France. William Blodgett slept like a top and turned out with no dread of the day's work. How his friends of the flotilla would envy him this gorgeous adventure! He was afloat in a British "Q-boat," a mystery ship, with Captain Arthur Scott, R.N., whose exploits had been almost incredible, whose career was one of the most brilliantly romantic in modern naval warfare. This rusty tramp of a *West Wales* whose purpose was so cleverly disguised might be the very ship which had decoyed four German submarines to their doom. William Blodgett scrutinized her from bow to stern before he reported for duty on the bridge. Even to his trained eye there were no indications of hidden guns, nothing that might arouse the suspicion of a wolfish U-boat.

"And I doped it last night that these Britishers needed speeding-up," reflected William. "They're bright. You'll have to hand it to 'em. This is some bag of tricks."

He glanced up and saw the captain standing outside the chart-room door. An old cloth cap was pulled a little over one eye. Sea-stained gray trousers were tucked into a pair of shabby boots. The blue jersey and heavy reefer harmonized with the picture. He waved a hand in greeting and exclaimed as Blodgett approached:

"That was a bit of camouflage last night — about my needing you as a navigating officer. It may be more to your taste to stick to your own job of chief gunner's mate. What do you say?"

"Anywhere, sir, so long as I can have a front seat when the show begins."

"Aye, but we may knock about for weeks without a run for our money," declared Captain Arthur Scott, V.C. "Fritz is not as stupid as he looks. However, I'll see to it that you are set ashore in time to return to your own ship."

"I'd like to sign on with you for the rest of the war," said William. "The destroyer game is like knitting socks for soldiers along-side this dizzy performance."

This competent American Navy man had no intention of loafing about as passenger or guest, although his British shipmates of the enlisted personnel seemed to regard it as an honor to have him aboard. He soon discovered that the resemblance to merchant seamen went no further than their clothes. Many details of naval routine were waived, but there was no real slackness. An order was obeyed on the instant and the watches were vigilantly kept. It was

a desperate service, with the odds against survival, and the crew had been picked from among hundreds of eager volunteers.

It was revealed to William Blodgett where the broadside batteries of guns were mounted and how they were concealed behind blind ports and beneath false hatches. It was true that the *West Wales* carried a cargo of timber, but the purpose was to help keep her afloat if she should be shot to pieces by a German submarine.

"It's this way," a British gunner explained to William. "I was with Captain Arthur Scott in the *Pandex*, the first Q-boat he went skipper of. We stood a lot of poundin' afore the Hun was certain the steamer was abandoned. He shelled us cruel, and us gunners that had stayed on board after the fake merchant crew had quit her was punished 'ard. The timber in her holds was all that kept the old *Pandex* from divin' to the bottom."

"I get you," replied Blodgett. "I guess I'll stay aboard instead of takin' to a boat. I'm curious to see the finish."

The mystery ship plodded out into the Atlantic and wallowed in the long roll of the Bay of Biscay. She sighted convoys of great ships crowded with American troops bound in to France, with the destroyers playing about them like shepherd dogs. Her wireless picked up reports of U-boats playing havoc with the merchant shipping along the converging courses that led to the ports of the Channel and the Irish Sea. The *West Wales* sent out no radio messages.

Her business was her own and she wandered the high seas in solitary and secretive fashion. One day slid into another and the wicked winter winds were lulled and the softness of spring was in the bright air. William Blodgett felt no sense of responsibility. He drilled with a gun crew, which was exercise enough to keep his appetite on edge, and slept his eight hours on end. The lazy motion of the broad-beamed tramp lulled him as if he were in a cradle. It was unlike the sudden, erratic twists and plunges of a destroyer. And what also soothed him was the fact that there was no destination to be hurrying toward at twenty-five knots, or troop ships to be searched for at some vague rendezvous a thousand miles off shore. In short, William Blodgett had found a life that soothed and healed his nerves.

After a fortnight of it, however, he began to fidget with impatience. His shipmates were made of imperturbable stuff. They took each day as it came and hoped for action, but seemed wholly unruffled. They had endured three years of war in this same manner, reflected William, and would continue to carry on until the last man died in his tracks. He was seated upon a hatch, his pipe between his teeth, his mind turning over such thoughts as these when there floated down from the bridge the bland and pleasant voice of Captain Arthur Scott:

"All hands to quarters! Lively, lads! Old Fritz has come up to have a look at us. Three points off the port bow."

There was no confusion aboard the *West Wales*.

Some of the men vanished to their stations below decks and William Blodgett was about to follow them, but the captain called him to say:

“Better not miss the first act. It may be amusing. Stay in one of the cabins and watch it through a window. Plenty of time before you will be needed at your gun. It may be a rotten poor show, at that. Some of them are, you know. We can’t always pull it off.”

The submarine had broken water and was moving on the surface at a speed considerably faster than that of the sluggish *West Wales*. They were perhaps five thousand yards apart. Presently the smoke gushed thick and black from the steamer’s funnel and her hull trembled to the increased vibration of the engines. It was pitiful to see her crowd on steam and attempt to escape. Instead of the naval discipline which had ruled the call to quarters, one might have beheld the excitement natural to a merchant crew in these tragic circumstances, men courageous, but more or less disorderly. Two gunners were popping away with the small piece mounted far astern, but the submarine veered to withdraw beyond range and the shells dropped harmlessly. The two passengers of the *West Wales* paraded the deck of the superstructure and displayed emotions of terror and dismay. The elderly husband was trying to console Maria, who wiped her eyes with the green veil and showed signs of hysteria. She was heard to remark in hoarse accents that she’d be eternally condemned before she would again submit to be toggged out in a blankety

female riggin' that made a British sailor feel like a blighted ass.

There was to be no wasting torpedoes on this dingy tramp steamer. The submarine opened fire at its own deliberately chosen distance and began to shell the target. It was murderous. The sea was so smooth that the U-boat's deck was a stable gun-platform. A few sighting shots and then the projectiles began to rip through the rusty plates of the *West Wales*. They killed and wounded men who were hidden below, but there came up no sound of groans, no calling for help. They took it as it came and grimly bided their time. This was how they played the game in a Q-boat. A shell shattered a wing of the bridge and Captain Arthur Scott shifted to the roof of the chart-house. He was smiling as he held the glasses to his eyes and chatted with his officers.

With a crash and a spreading cloud of soot the funnel of the ship crumpled up and fell over the side while the bits of shrapnel spattered the steel deck-houses. That estimable woman, Maria, clapped a hand to her leg, pulled up her skirts, and announced her hope that the Hun what did such things to a helpless lady would sizzle in hell for a million years. William Blodgett was awaiting orders when Captain Arthur Scott touched his arm and murmured:

"Come along with me, if you like. It's time to get the boats away. I stay behind, of course. My first officer plays the part of the merchant skipper. He looks the part, I fancy."

William nodded assent and followed Captain Scott

down an iron staircase inside the ship. They came to the false deck or floor which had been built in the cargo holds, many feet above the water-line. These spaces were shadowy, but some light filtered through bull's-eyes set in the deck above, and there were a few bulb lamps carefully screened. William Blodgett joined his own group of British comrades and perceived that he was needed, for two of them had been struck down by a shell which raked a bulk-head. Captain Scott stood at the eye-piece of a periscope whose tube ran up through the deck and was concealed in a ventilator. He was able to sweep the sea and obtain accurate vision with no chance of disclosure.

They waited in silence, these groups of British seamen, shaking dice with death. It was not long before they heard the tramp of feet above them, the shouting of orders, the creak of davits, the whine of the blocks through the falls, and then the bump and scrape of the ship's boats as they swung outboard from the chocks and one by one were lowered to the water. There was the crash of a shell, cries of pain, and shouts for help. At his observation post Captain Arthur Scott exclaimed, with bitter intensity:

"Smashed a boat after it got clear of the ship, the rotters! They saw the crew was trying to abandon her."

William Blodgett's eyes were blazing and he had stripped off his shirt. Bare to the waist, his powerful arms tattooed with a foul anchor and the eagle above a starry shield, he was superbly a gunner's mate of

the American Navy which had inherited the traditions of Paul Jones, of Isaac Hull, of Farragut and Dewey. Ancient grudges forgotten, he was glad and proud to be one of a British gun crew in action against a detestable foe. It seemed to him right and proper that they should battle together for the freedom of the seas.

The ship was now deserted by the thirty-odd men who comprised her normal crew as a merchant steamer. You may be sure that the commander of the German submarine had counted them as they scrambled into the boats. Maria and her husband had safely disembarked and Captain Scott watched them as they huddled in the stern of the yawl. The *West Wales* floated as a shattered derelict. Her boats pulled away hastily to avoid shelling by the submarine. Their oars splashed awkwardly. Progress was slow and wavering. They appeared to be making frantic exertions and yet it was so crab-fashion that the distance from the steamer increased very slowly. It was plausible enough, however, this clumsy, panic-stricken exodus of a crew of merchant sailors in terror of their lives.

The submarine turned and ran closer after prolonged hesitation. To finish the job by sinking the *West Wales* as soon as possible was the correct procedure. And the German commander's orders were to interrogate the captain of the steamer whenever feasible and also to loot any stores which might be saved before sending her to the bottom. This was not to be done rashly. The *verdamnte* Englanders had a

nasty trick of inventing surprises. They fought unfairly, not in the least like officers and gentlemen of the Imperial German Navy.

Running in to point-blank range, the U-boat carefully and slowly shelled the *West Wales*. It was intended to be a series of death-strokes, as well as by way of precaution, a hurricane of explosives in which no men could live should they have remained aboard in hiding.

"The quiet life," muttered William Blodgett at his post between decks. "If the doctor could see me now! But I'm darn sure I never felt in better health."

The wicked shells were finding these indomitable gunners. As they fell, they were carried to one side. Below them the water was gurgling into the holds. The steamer was in the last extremity. It seemed as though she was about to carry these men down with her. The woodwork had caught fire and was filling the space with choking smoke. The heat became stifling. The steel plates beneath their feet were scorching their shoes. They gasped for breath. And still the dying ship was shelled and men were torn and slain beside their guns. But there were still gunners enough to work them.

"Glad you joined the party, Yank?" laughed a brawny sight-setter who stood beside William Blodgett.

"It's a real pleasure to bear a hand," was the polite response.

It was touching to watch them turn for a glimpse of their skipper, Captain Arthur Scott, V.C., and to

note how it heartened them when he sang out a cheery word or two or passed from gun to gun, easy, cool, with that jauntily boyish demeanor of his. It was all right as long as he was willing to stand the gaff. A tough billet to chew, but a Q-boat was n't all beer and skittles. At last the captain became actually excited as he sang out:

“By Jove, the beggar has swallowed the hook! I say! Steady, all! You will have to be mauled only a bit longer. He is closing in, and our boats are fooling him nicely. Awfully clever! Perfectly ripping!”

Yes, the U-boat was no longer suspicious. Her deck and conning tower exposed, she was moving slowly to intercept the boats from the *West Wales*. They were huddling close together, and the seamen were at their oars. Curiously enough, the more they floundered in their effort to obey the instructions shouted from the submarine, the nearer they drew to the side of the abandoned steamer. It was imperceptible to the German officers who had climbed out upon the submarine's deck. They cursed the boats for their lubberly awkwardness and bawled questions at the skipper, that jovial, bald-headed commander in the British Navy who posed so well as a merchant mariner. He in turn told his men to handle their oars less like a lot of cursed swabs, and they meekly yanked with might and main.

It was an absurd muddle, but somehow the position of the submarine became so altered that she lay broadside on no more than a few hundred yards from the pitiful wreck of the deserted *West Wales*. The

German commander glanced up and felt a premonition of danger, or so it appeared, for he yelled down the hatch to go ahead on the engines. He had no more than spoken than the false ports of the mystery ship dropped with a mighty clangor. So many hinged doors cut into the side, they were released at a word from Captain Arthur Scott. As they dropped they revealed the White Ensign of the British Navy. It had been painted on the inside of each of these long, hinged ports. It confronted the enemy in this splendidly dramatic moment. The *West Wales* thereby proclaimed herself as a naval vessel about to engage with her battle-flag displayed as the law and the courtesy of the sea duly required.

The daylight flooded into the between-deck spaces of the *West Wales* and gleamed and glinted on a powerful battery of five-inch guns. Behind them crouched the remnants of their British crews, and in command of one of them was a brawny man of middle age whose right arm was tattooed with the eagle above a starry shield. His deep voice led the cheer which rolled fore and aft, a cheer that rang out an instant before the five-inch battery roared in unison. It was a blasting broadside, and it smote the submarine as one might smash an egg with a sledgehammer. One broadside only! The U-boat was instantaneously obliterated. Where she had been was a tumult of dirty water and a few bits of something or other. The incident was closed. Captain Arthur Scott had added another one to his score.

"Jolly well done," said he, with a beaming face;

"but it seems to me that this wretched steamer is foundering."

This was indubitably the fact. The *West Wales* had given up the ghost when the explosion of those five-inch guns simply pulled her shattered plates apart. She vanished from the surface in a slow and gentle manner just as the British gunners were hoisting their wounded out through the open ports. Most of them were saved by the boats which hastened to the rescue and it was to be observed that the oars now rose and fell with the trained precision of British naval seamen. Upon the tranquil sea floated four boats, crowded to the gunwales, and there was never a trace of hostile submarine or rusty tramp steamer. Oblivious of wounds and discomforts, these castaways were in the most blithesome spirits and they sang as they baled and plied the oars. The two elderly passengers were most undignified. Father plucked off his white whiskers and smashed his stiff hat over the head of Maria who was chucking William Blodgett under the chin and swearing that her 'eart beat true to 'im, but she'd love him more if 'e'd set up the gin and bitters for a lady that had a perishin' thirst.

"Not that but we fight for glory and old England, my dear," added Maria, "but there's a thousand quid prize money for every blinkin' U-boat actually destroyed. And the Admiralty won't argify over this bit o' work. You get your bloomin' share, Yank, for you served under Captain Arthur Scott, V.C., and you scuppered the Hun the same as the rest of us."

A British patrol boat picked them up next morn-

ing. She was bound in to a Channel port where William Blodgett, as he puzzled over the problem, discovered that he would be a long distance from Queenstown. He had signed on in the hope of earning a month's wages, but he was still shy of money and ten days of liberty remained on his hands. It was Captain Arthur Scott who unwittingly came to the rescue.

"There will be some delay in awarding the prize money — red-tape and so on — and you may be transferred or sent home or something of the sort. If you don't mind, I shall be frightfully pleased if you will let me advance your share before we part."

"I did n't intend to figure in it," protested Henry. "I had a fine trip, sir, and was amply repaid."

"But the Admiralty will compel you to take it, my dear man. You can't escape it, really. Prize money is one of the ancient institutions of the Royal Navy, though I can't understand why they don't abolish it, I'm sure."

"Then if it's going to be forced on me, I'd rather take it now if it's all the same to you, sir. I can't afford to get in trouble with the Admiralty."

"Very good," smiled Captain Arthur Scott as they shook hands. "Your friends in the destroyer will be rather pleased over your adventure, won't they?"

"They'll never learn it from me!" cried William in genuine alarm.

Two days after this he reached Queenstown and went straightway aboard his ship. The doctor was on deck and he frowned severely as he exclaimed:

"Thirty days' leave, Blodgett? How about it? What are you doing aboard?"

"I was restored to health, sir, and so reported for duty."

"You do look like yourself," was the doctor's verdict. "What did it?"

"The quiet life, sir, and being where there was no excitement — except maybe in spots."

"How are your nerves? All over the jumps?"

"Yes, sir. It was the change of occupation."

"Cows and pigs and cabbages, eh?"

"In West Wales it was, sir, with some English friends of mine," answered William Christian Blodgett, looking the doctor straight in the eye. "We wore old clothes and sort of tramped it over the road without bein' bound anywhere in particular."

ON A LEE SHORE

"BULL" MADDOCK had enlisted in the Navy for private and personal reasons which had nothing to do with making the world safe for democracy. He had been a fireman in an American liner between New York and Liverpool, a grimy slave of the slice-bar and shovel who sweated for wages which enabled him to get drunk and stay so while in port. He was troubled by no wider ambition than this. When stripped to the waist in the stoke-hole, the brawn of him was revealed as superb, and youth also was in his favor, for which reasons this sodden existence had not corroded his vigor. He was a surly, silent brute with a temper which was apt to flare wickedly when fed with cheap whiskey. There were women of the waterfront who admired his strength and thought him good to look at, and more than one had been fond of him even after his money was gone.

It was because of a girl that "Bull" Maddock swung his fist to the jaw of the mate of a Swedish cargo boat. The mate crumpled under the table of the back room of the Front Street saloon, and it was the concerted opinion of the spectators, versed in such matters, that the fireman had croaked him. At any rate, the mariner from Sweden remained inert so long after the count of ten that Maddock was strongly advised to beat it. He had been justified, no doubt, in showing the meddlesome square-head where he got

off, but breaking his neck was a trifle far-fetched. It was n't usually done, even in Front Street circles.

The police knew "Bull" Maddock quite intimately. He had made an impression upon as many as four of them who were required to put him aboard the patrol wagon while ashore from a previous voyage. Here was an episode, however, which appeared to be so much more serious that he instantly concluded to let his ship sail without him. With what was left of his wages he fled as far as Boston and then his purpose wavered. They would hunt for him in the Atlantic ports, raking the wharves, the steamers about to sail, and the sailors' boarding-houses. It never occurred to him to turn inland. All he knew was the sea and its bitter toil.

Steering an aimless course, he wandered past a Navy recruiting booth on Boston Common and halted while a spruce boatswain's mate appealed to the crowd in words of fiery eloquence. There was no responsive glow in the heart of "Bull" Maddock, who stood there, a hulking, glowering figure tormented by a raging thirst. Presently he roughly shouldered his way to the front and told the yeoman that he was ready to sign on. The crowd cheered. Here was the kind of recruit to put a crimp in the Huns. He would eat 'em alive.

The Navy was sorely in need of seasoned firemen, and the oratorical boatswain's mate jumped down to slap Maddock on the back and tell him he was the real stuff. The fugitive grunted and pulled out

a packet of discharges from former ships. He was proud of them, for although his behavior might be outrageous ashore his work at sea had been certified as excellent by one chief engineer after another. He could make steam and hold it in all weathers. This was enough.

He had intended to enlist under a false name, but his wits were muddled, and having exhibited his discharges there was nothing to do but sign as James J. Maddock, with his next of kin an old mother of whose whereabouts he had not the slightest idea. The recruiting booth snatched him into the service as a prize and hustled him over to the office to be examined and sworn in. For the time he had lost volition. He went dumbly in the hope of escaping the police and the electric chair. It was any port in a storm, and he was on a lee shore.

The Navy doctor surveyed this strapping fireman, thumped him with a gloating air, and perceived that he was physically flawless, barring ragged nerves and recent saturation with bad booze. While awaiting further orders "Bull" Maddock scanned the latest New York newspapers with painful attention, but failed to find any mention of the murder of the mate of a Swedish merchant steamer in the back room of a Front Street saloon. This seemed odd. Homicide and manslaughter were routine occurrences in the surging metropolis, but the reporters never passed them by. It filtered into the mind of the sullen recruit that possibly he had failed to break the neck of the square-head who had tried to steal his girl. Instead of feeling

gratitude for his deliverance, Maddock was indignant. He swore vengeance against the unfortunate mate for having tricked him.

"The big stiff! Look what he let me in for!" he muttered to himself. "This fool Navy has gone and pinched me and I can't get out. And a guy in uniform can't get a drink nowhere, not if he's perishin' for it. If I ever meet that Swede I'll hit him twice and make sure he stays out."

Disconsolately and as docile as a sheep, Maddock was passed along from one officer to another until he came to rest in a navy-yard barracks. He was accustomed to obey men who wore blue uniforms and brass buttons in the merchant marine, but he had been his own master in port. Now he was a prisoner, with every hour of the night and day to be accounted for, and punishment swift and stern awaiting the smallest lapse of duty. Afraid to show how much he loathed the prospect, but inwardly rebellious, he had nothing to say to the other men, who agreed that he was a hard guy and had better be left alone.

A few days in barracks and "Bull" Maddock looked most unlike the drunken vagabond who had skulked into Boston. His eye was clear, his hand steady, and he ate like a man with a healthy appetite. Cleanliness was a luxury which he had never known before. The Navy compelled him to bathe and shave and wear fresh clothes. It provided him with immaculate living quarters and fed him with the most scrupulous care. In his own experience a marine fireman was treated like a dog. This was all amaz-

ingly different. It did not reconcile him to his destiny, but it was good for him nevertheless.

He was assigned to hard labor, trimming coal on the docks and firing a stationary boiler, and he did it easily, with contempt for the recruits of softer fiber who nursed blistered hands and aching backs. No liberty was granted him and he abandoned all hope of getting drunk. At length an officer came to his name on a typewritten list and checked it with a pencil as he said to his assistant:

“Maddock, James J. — send him to the *Albacore* with that draft of Reserves. They need him. Know him by sight, do you?”

“Yes. He’s a bear. I thought we’d have to treat him rough, but he has made no trouble so far. A course of fresh air and exercise has made him as fit as a fiddle.”

“Good! The skipper of the *Albacore* ought to thank us. He will be sure of one real husky in the black gang. I can’t say I envy Lieutenant-Commander Lester Duncan that job of his — sailing for France in a fancy yacht with a crew of cheerful greenhorns.”

“Duncan likes it. He’s as happy as a kid with a new toy, although he is the only regular officer in the outfit. His navigator was chief clerk to the president of a gas company and the executive manufactured plumbers’ supplies.”

“And the yacht is just slinging her guns aboard. They are all sawing and hammering and ripping things out like mad — the whole crew — with orders to clear for sea to-morrow night.”

"France needs more ships to keep Fritz under," said the other, "so we'll have to shove along whatever is handy."

This was how "Bull" Maddock happened to shoulder his canvas bag and march aboard the shapely, sea-going yacht which had been converted into a war vessel at such exceedingly short notice. He reported to a harrassed young engineer officer who sent him to join the bluejackets coaling ship. It was odd company for Maddock and he felt bewildered. One of these enlisted men had been captain of a Yale eleven, another was the son of a railroad magnate, as casual remarks disclosed, and a third referred to a famous rear-admiral as "good old dad." They greeted the frowning "Bull" Maddock with affable good-nature, but he was suspicious and aloof. It was a bug-house performance, he reflected, to take a ship to sea with a bunch of "'rah! 'rah" boys and amachoors that had never been up against a he-man's game.

The Navy has a trick of getting things done somehow, and the *Albacore* went to sea next night with her undaunted crew still ripping out partitions, boarding up windows, and setting bunks in place. Their spirits were jubilant because they were bound across to hunt submarines. It was in the month of August and heavy weather seemed unlikely. The transformed yacht, built for ocean cruising, laid a course for the Azores as a port of call, and put the miles behind her with an easy stride.

His watches in the fire-room were mere play for "Bull" Maddock, who had stoked the ravening fur-

naces of liners driven at top speed, when men dropped in their tracks and were dragged or kicked aside. It was an inhuman trade, as he knew it, with little sympathy for the poor devils who could not stand the pace. This was a scratch crew hastily mustered, these eighty-odd men in the *Albacore*, and among "Bull" Maddock's mates below decks only two or three were trained Navy stokers. Toward the others his attitude was calloused, unfeeling, at times openly derisive. Seasickness afflicted them, and when, with a following breeze, the heat rose to a hundred and twenty or thirty degrees they wilted helplessly and had to be revived.

"Bull" Maddock, bare to the waist and hard as nails, a blackened towel around his neck, swigged gallons of oatmeal water, and snarled from a corner of his mouth:

"That's right. Lay down and quit. What did you come to sea for, Willie? Curl up like a dog, uh? Watch your gauge. Droppin' again. You could n't fire a coffee-pot."

He seemed to cherish a particular dislike for a plucky stripling of the Naval Reserve whose name was Spencer Lucas. The dizzy heat, the smell of the bilges, the erratic motion of the floor were almost more than he could endure, but he never missed a watch and swore to qualify as a fireman if it killed him. He was a tall, shy youth, with a manner excessively polite, who had been studying for his Ph.D. at a Western university. He was so much the gentleman that "Bull" Maddock mistook his courtesy for cowardice and considered him an easy mark.

At length Mr. Spencer Lucas lost his temper and smote Maddock over the head with a shovel. The weapon bounced from the skull of the toughened warrior, who staggered back and burned his arm against a furnace door. This annoyed him and he slapped Mr. Spencer Lucas, who sprawled on his face at a distance of some ten feet from the spot. It was the judgment of the machinist's mate who interfered that if Maddock had soaked him with a solid punch the lad would have been driven through the side of the ship. The engineer officer strongly objected to locking them up and leaving his force short-handed, so Lieutenant-Commander Lester Duncan haled them on deck at mast next morning to inflict deferred penalties and likewise to get better acquainted with the unruly Maddock, James J., fireman first class.

The skipper of the *Albacore* had been coxswain of an Annapolis crew which may indicate that he was no six-foot hero. To his friends he was known as "Dusty" Duncan and the nickname was highly meritorious. Quick at decisions, jauntily cool in a crisis, he was an excellent type of officer for the hair-trigger game of exterminating hostile submarines or guarding a convoy. When he twisted an end of his little black mustache and suavely gave an order, there was obedience hearty and implicit. To sail with "Dusty" Duncan meant something doing.

To the quarter-deck trooped the culprits, big "Bull" Maddock and the scholarly Spencer Lucas, almost a Ph.D., with two other firemen and a coal-

passer as witnesses. They were trim and clean, of course, but the grime was never quite removed from beneath the eyes of the "underground savages," and it lay like dark shadows, giving this group a wearied and melancholy air. The case of Spencer Lucas was easily disposed of. He had been provoked to chastise his tormenter with a shovel. The provocation was clear. But he could not be permitted to take the law into his own hands and, for the sake of discipline, he would have to suffer loss of pay and liberty. The officer of the deck court made it as mild as possible. In the same circumstances he would have been tempted to floor Maddock with a slice-bar.

The lieutenant-commander's face hardened when the stalwart bully confronted him. There was insolence in the man's bearing, smouldering hatred of authority. Duncan read the symptoms. Maddock was unaccustomed to decent treatment. Until he entered the Navy he had been handled as a brute who must be kept under. Duncan surmised that there was a spark of manliness in him, that the soul could not be wholly extinguished. His features no longer clouded by dissipation, "Bull" Maddock appeared to be something better than a powerful animal. There was stubborn courage in the bold chin and straight mouth, and the gray eyes were rather candid than shifty. The gleam in them reminded Duncan of a good dog spoiled by mishandling. He spoke to Maddock with unusual patience.

"You have been looking for trouble ever since you came aboard this ship. Have you any complaints

— has anybody abused you or handed you a dirty deal?”

“No, it ain’t that, sir,” replied the fireman, evidently surprised by the turn of the inquiry.

“Well, what is it?” sharply demanded the skipper. “Here you are, an old hand, and a regular bruiser of a man — just the kind the Navy needs to shovel the coal in. It’s the finest kind of a chance to do your bit.”

“Ain’t I doing it?” fiercely interrupted Maddock. “Show me any three guys that do as much in a watch.”

“I grant you that,” evenly replied Duncan; “but why don’t you help the other men to learn the trick of it? They have enlisted because they love their flag and country. They don’t pretend to be expert firemen or coal-passers. I thought I was lucky when I laid eyes on you and looked up your record at sea. I expected to give you a better rating before long. But you are a chronic disturbance, you hinder the work below, and I don’t propose to stand for it.”

From his towering height “Bull” Maddock looked down at the dapper officer, and said with a grin:

“Aw, this make-believe sailarin’ gets my goat. You leave those left-footed young loafers to me and I’ll make firemen of ’em or they’ll wish they was in hell.”

“Make-believe sailing, is it, Maddock?” crisply responded Lieutenant-Commander “Dusty” Duncan. “That’s quite enough from you. Here, master-at-arms, put the irons on this man and confine him

on bread and water. It may sweeten him up a bit."

"Bull" Maddock stepped back and cleared for action. He felt in honor bound to give as good an account of himself as he had in the case of the four New York policemen who had inserted him into the patrol wagon. The Navy moved with a celerity, however, which baffled his intentions. An automatic pistol poked him in the stomach and while he hesitated the bracelets clicked on his wrists. His surrender was immediate and unconditional. As he passed along the deck in custody of the master-at-arms, whose demeanor was stolid and unruffled, there was never a gleam of sympathy among the crew. The youngsters grinned and nudged each other and Maddock observed their mirth.

For him there was no novelty in sitting in a cell with barred windows, nor could he feel the stigma of disgrace, but the sense of humiliation scorched him like a live coal and his anger was stirred to its muddy depths. To be laughed at by these boyish rookies of the Navy was intolerable, but he hated them not so much as he did the skipper of the *Albacore*, the dapper little lieutenant-commander who had ordered him flung into the brig. Brooding in the gloomy room, he said to himself:

"He looked at me like I was dirt, the chesty gink! I was n't giving him any lip — I had n't started nothin' rough — and he was hopin' for a chance to drill me with a bullet. Navy stuff, uh? Get a man that can do his work and then hand it

him worse 'n a dog. Maybe I'll show this bird — the two of us'll be ashore some night and there won't be no Johnny Legs handy with a gun and a pair of irons."

At dinner in the ward-room, the engineer officer seemed annoyed as he said to "Dusty" Duncan:

"You went and pinched my bucko fireman after all. What am I going to do without him?"

"Your problem, my dear boy," was the urbane answer. "Apparently you could n't manage him, so I had to draw cards. He is mean clear through. If he seems sorry for his sins I will return him to-morrow."

"You better had, Skipper, if you expect standard speed when his watch is on. Wow, but he is some walloper of a coal-tosser."

"But he can't be permitted to run this ship," was the stiff retort. "I intend to keep an eye on him. He has the makings of a useful gob."

Unrepentant, but outwardly subdued, "Bull" Maddock returned to duty and ceased to curse or taunt his companions of the fire-room. He became even more solitary and detached than before. Oddly enough, the first man to break through his resentful reticence was the intellectual youth, Spencer Lucas, who had attempted to brain him with a shovel. They slept in the same tier of bunks forward and faced each other across the mess-table. Maddock must have cherished a sneaking respect for the valor of the seasick amateur in assaulting him, and Spencer Lucas, for his part, may have regarded the big

fireman as a study in psychology. At any rate, they were seen talking together on deck, to the amazement of all hands.

"He really loosened up," Lucas explained to a chum. "I promised to write a letter for him — to a girl in New York, telling her what had become of him. He left her suddenly, it seems, under the mistaken impression that he had broken the neck of a rival. There's romance for you! Could you beat it? And I hope to write realistic fiction some day. I shall cultivate 'Bull' Maddock."

It was not so strange, after all, that this pair of shipmates, so utterly dissimilar, should have arrived at an understanding, although they had nothing whatever in common. The war had snatched Spencer Lucas, the student, from a sheltered, uneventful existence that was almost cloistered. He was ignorant of life, as the saying is, excepting as he had read of it in books. This "Bull" Maddock, speaking a different language, revealed to him glimpses of a world raw, passionate, and turbulent in which the weaker man was stamped under foot. And because Spencer Lucas was genuinely interested in what he had to say, the bully of the fire-room gang became less taciturn, more human. Nobody else had ever cared. They were brief tales, gruff references, told without egotism or boasting, but to the sensitive imagination of young Lucas they were like pictures such as an artist conjures on canvas with a few sweeping strokes of the brush. They vividly portrayed for him the eternal conflict of men with

the sea, and the fleeting respites whose vision knew naught else than the gin mills, brawls, and brothels of the water-side which seemed so sad and wicked and forlorn.

This one redeeming virtue was to be inferred, that "Bull" Maddock had never dodged a fight or left a pal in the lurch. And while Spencer Lucas listened so attentively and coaxed for more, the stalwart wastrel was also caught and held by new impressions. Unconsciously they were influencing him to doff a little of his brutal, uncouth demeanor. At times his eyes were wistful and perplexed as though he were groping for something which eluded him. It was perhaps because he began to surmise that he was his worst enemy. Spencer Lucas discovered that he had once put on the gloves against a heavy-weight champion of the British Navy and knocked him over the ropes in six rounds. Lucas persuaded him to box an exhibition bout with a beefy gunner's mate of the *Albacore* who had bragged of his own prowess. Maddock showed a speed and skill which smothered his opponent, but he was merciful and inflicted no serious damage. Nothing could have been better for Maddock than the hearty cheers of his shipmates. He actually grinned and ducked his head in response. In the fire-room that night, Spencer Lucas said to him:

"The whole outfit respected you for the way you handled yourself, 'Bull.'"

"Uh? I don't get you. You mean they think I'm not so rotten?"

"Precisely that. You put up a fair, clean scrap with Brady — kept your temper, and boxed like a wizard."

"Lay off that stuff, bo. Nothin' to it. The skipper thinks I'm a dirty hound, and the boys follow his lead. I'll never get by with the Navy."

Spencer Lucas earnestly disputed this. He felt convinced that Maddock had acquired merit and would some day make a corking bluejacket. The *Albacore* pursued her long voyage with the favor of bright skies and a kindly sea while the crew adapted itself, with a zealous intelligence, to the arduous routine of the day's work. There were a few seasoned petty officers to leaven the raw lump and Lieutenant-Commander "Dusty" Duncan possessed an extraordinary knack of infusing a ship's company with his own alert and disciplined personality. He dared not trust too much to his officers and he grew thin with loss of sleep, but his demeanor was no less jaunty and he smiled approvingly when the fo'castle quartet rolled out the chorus that ended:

"Tho' it's mighty inconvenient
To be heaving up your grub,
Still we're steaming to the east'ard
And we're hunting for a sub."

And so they rolled into the Bay of Biscay and sighted the bold headlands of France where the valiant little torpedo-boat, flying the Tricolor, came out to meet and welcome them, and seaplanes swooped overhead. The *Albacore*, quite ship-shape by now, steamed into an ancient port whose gray

citadel had beheld the navies, forays, and invasions of a thousand years. She anchored in the shelter of a breakwater and saw the huge, crowded troop ships disembarking their regiments of men in khaki who were resolved to smash their way to Berlin. American yachts and destroyers were already in the harbor, and with blinker and flag-hoist they signaled cheery greetings. To the men of the *Albacore* it was thrilling to feel that they were in the game and about to play a hand.

The liberty parties swarmed into the boats, eager to hit the beach and discover what France was like, but there was no shore leave for "Bull" Maddock. He was not alone in his misery, for Spencer Lucas also suffered the penalty because of that argument with a coal shovel. As befitted a student of philosophy he forbore to rail against his fate, but the big fireman cursed his luck and hated Lieutenant-Commander "Dusty" Duncan more earnestly than ever. There was no law to stop a man in uniform from buying a drink ashore, so "Bull" had discovered, and the French girls were said to admire the bold Yankee bluejacket, wherefore it was a sore affliction to be marooned aboard the *Albacore*.

He was in a disgruntled humor, darkly nursing his grievances, when the yacht sailed four days later on escort duty with a coastwise merchant convoy bound across the English Channel. Off Ushant she sighted a German submarine which hoped to play havoc with the plodding cargo boats, like a coyote in a sheep-fold, but the jubilant tars of the

Albacore banged away with three-inch shells and compelled the pirate to submerge. By way of good measure, two depth bombs were dropped from the stern, and they may have damaged Fritz, for he leaked a large amount of oil which floated up in glistening blobs.

The explosion of the bombs shook the yacht as if she had run on a reef. Down in the fire-room "Bull" Maddock and Spencer Lucas were knocked headlong and they were ready to swear that the ship had been torpedoed.

"A great life — nix," growled Maddock as he rubbed a bruised ear. "These guys get a fine little scrap — shootin' up a Hun and lettin' him have a couple of depth bums, and where do we come in, uh? Not a thing do we see of it, and we get stood on our heads."

"Oh, we have to be satisfied with doing our duty," replied Spencer Lucas.

"Duty? I'd like to meet the lad that invented that word," angrily observed Maddock. "This war and me don't hit it off at all."

The skipper was in a more jovial mood than this. His yacht had behaved with credit in the first encounter with the enemy and the convoy was safeguarded against loss. It was because of the efficient conduct of the watches below that full steam pressure had been given when needed and the *Albacore* was thereby enabled to make for the U-boat at top speed and so release the deadly charges that explode under water. As one of the gang to receive com-

mendation, "Bull" Maddock was restored to favor and could look forward to a brief liberty at the end of the voyage.

The paymaster was waiting for the *Albacore* when she returned to port, and Maddock had a roll of money in his pocket. Spencer Lucas went ashore with him, hoping for the best, but expecting the worst. As a chaperon and guardian of morals, the scholar of the stoke-hole felt that his work was cut out for him. Maddock looked spick-and-span in a new uniform. He had intentions, however, which were not so creditable, and he confided to his companion, in accents deep and sincere:

"Watch my smoke, kid. I'm liable to give you an imitation of a strong man stewed to the guards. And then if I run afoul of Lieutenant-Commander 'Dusty' Duncan, he'll have something to put me in irons for."

"But, my goodness, 'Bull'," gasped the horrified Spencer Lucas, "if you lay hands on an officer you may be sent to prison for the rest of your life. Please come along with me and we'll have a nice little dinner at the Y.M.C.A., and —"

"Bull" Maddock laughed at this and rudely broke in: "You won't do, kid. I guess we part company. Our ideas of shore liberty don't hitch. Wow, look at the joint with a million bottles in the window. And pipe the dame behind the bar! So long! This village of Brest sure does look good to me."

Disconsolately the conscientious Spencer Lucas

proceeded up the street alone, convinced that his labors had been wasted. The big fireman was a hopeless blackguard instead of a brand plucked from the burning. For his own part, Maddock was also suffering disappointment. There was never a whiskey bottle in the wine-shop, nor could he buy any other tippie with a real kick to it, for cognac was under the ban. He swigged red wine and white wine, shifted to sherry, topped it off with port, and accumulated no more than a warm glow and a slightly fuzzy sensation in the head.

"I'll be drowned before I get the feel of liquor in me," he sadly observed to the black-eyed young woman who served him, but she could only smile and mystify him with vivacious repartee of which he understood not a word. He determined to seek other havens, and, with the instinct of his kind, steered a course for the most disreputable quarter of the city, jostling French sailors, Senegalese infantrymen, negro stevedores, and Tonquin coolies from his path. At the head of an alley in which slatternly, painted women loitered in the doorways, a trim young American bluejacket raised his truncheon and curtly announced:

"Nothing doing, old sport! Out of bounds — savvy? No Yanks need apply."

"Beat it, son. You're obstructin' traffic," growled the fireman.

The youngster rapped on the pavement and three other sturdy members of the naval patrol force mobilized from streets near by. They came on the

run and Maddock concluded to move on. The meddlesome Navy had interfered with him again. What right had it to police the red-light district of a French town? "Bull" Maddock was unable to fathom it, but there was no use in arguing the matter. The odds were against him and he was still too sober to fight all hands.

For hours he wandered and grew weary of white wine and red, nor was he a sociable creature by nature so that he failed to enjoy the cosmopolitan atmosphere of this port of many nations. It was in the evening when he became conscious of a gnawing hunger which increased his irritation. He had eaten what one or two little French restaurants had to offer, but this was no more than a provocation. One could not call it grub for a strong man like "Bull" Maddock. At length his aimless pilgrimage carried him past a large building facing an open square and he halted to stare through the uncurtained windows. In the gloom he failed to discern the sign above the door, but the place was mightily attractive.

Yankee bluejackets were eating at small tables, a piano was rattling rag-time, and there were glimpses of two or three women in a sort of natty uniform who appeared to be in charge. "Bull" Maddock moved nearer, and as the door swung open there was wafted out the savor of real coffee such as is brewed in God's country. These women — they were not French, reflected the derelict; and although he had never moved in respectable circles he was quite

certain that they were not the kind he knew. They were actually waiting on the American gobs at the tables and talking with them. He was inclined to shy off, but at recognizing two lads from the *Albacore* he overcame his diffidence and hovered in the doorway.

"A swell dump, and I don't get it at all," he said to himself, "but I'm pavement sore and adrift with nowheres to go."

When he entered the room his manner was truculent, as though he dared them to throw him out, but nobody seemed to consider him an intruder and he slumped into a chair at the nearest table. Presently he was ordering a steak, French fried potatoes, apple pie and coffee, with doughnuts and cheese on the side. The menu card disclosed the appalling fact that he had strayed into the Y.M.C.A., but under the mellowing influence of a square meal he ceased to care. There was no preaching sermons at him and he was not regarded as a lost soul. In fact it was a sailors' hang-out, but cleaner and sweeter than he had ever dreamed such a resort could be.

A burly, resolute figure of a bluejacket as he sat there, one of the women noticed him and was quick to read the kind of man he was. At home she had been accustomed to wealth and social station, but she seemed no less at ease amid these strange surroundings. "Bull" Maddock eyed her with curiosity and wonderment. She was what they called a lady, you could gamble on that, and she was still youthful, with bonny brown hair and a fine color and a smile

that was jolly and frank. Maddock lingered, smoking cigarettes and listening to the chorus of the blue-jackets at the piano.

After a while the lady crossed the room and halted to say to the silent fireman of the *Albacore*:

"Is this your first visit in port? I am sure you have n't been in here before."

"Yes, ma'am, it's my first offense," replied the blushing giant, who was very much confused.

"I am Miss Penfield, of Baltimore," was the gracious information. "And your name?"

"Maddock, James J., ma'am. I was in Baltimore three years ago, in a Fruit Company's steamer, and busted my crust fallin' through a hatch."

"How unfortunate. But it mended, of course. You look as though nothing could hurt you very much. Is the Y.M.C.A. so dreadful, after all? You seemed all fussed up when you came in."

"Well, a tramp like me ain't in the habit of it," admitted Maddock in apologetic tones. "But I'm ready to murder the lad that knocks this place of yours. What's the idea? In the merchant service most people did n't care whether a sailor went to hell or not. At least, I never run into no life-savin' apparatus like this. Perhaps I was out o' luck."

"I am sure you were," Miss Penfield replied, with grave sympathy, and her voice was almost motherly. "The folks at home expect us to take the best of care of you boys. Have you been in the Navy long?"

"No, ma'am, but I'm an old hand at stokin' furnaces and there's few seas I have n't sizzled in."

"Oh, dear! A hard life, but it's different now that you are serving the flag, Mr. Maddock."

In the bold face of the outcast there was a responsive gleam. The episode was so prodigiously novel that new emotions stirred within him. He became loquacious while they talked of ships and convoys and submarines and the gossip of the fleet. The other men went out until the room was almost empty. Maddock glanced at the clock on the wall. It was almost time for him to seek the boat at the landing-stage.

Miss Penfield exclaimed:

"I'm so sorry, but I must begin to batten things down for the night. It is my late trick and the other girls have gone. And the French janitor was taken ill this morning."

"Let me bear a hand, ma'am," urged Maddock.

"Thank you so much. The wooden shutters are rather clumsy to close and fasten."

Before the lights were turned out, he looked again at the clock. He had not a minute to spare, but Miss Penfield was standing irresolute as though waiting for some one. "Bull" Maddock thought of the throngs of alien soldiers and sailors in the dim and narrow streets and a vague sense of chivalry caused him to suggest:

"It don't seem right to me for a lady to be pesterin' around alone at this hour."

"I expected a friend," she explained, "but I won't wait. Three of us girls have a little apartment

together beyond the Rue Saigon and I can find it with no trouble whatever."

"Not by yourself you don't, ma'am," heavily objected "Bull." "I tacked across the Rue Saigon a couple of times to-day and it looked rough to me. It's right next to the — to the district that's put out of bounds."

"I understand," said Miss Penfield, smiling at his manly concern for her welfare. "If you insist, Mr. Maddock, it will be pleasant to have you walk along with me."

"Nothing else to it, ma'am," declared her worshipful protector, who knew full well that he would be logged and punished for missing the liberty boat. This was of no consequence. The lady had been good to him and it was his duty to stand by. It was altogether a wonderful experience which rather bedazzled him. Swinging along beside Miss Penfield he towered masterfully above her and there was a chip upon that broad shoulder of his. If she had been so much as jostled there would have been need of an undertaker. When they parted at the door of the picturesque old dwelling, "Bull" Maddock said, with simple sincerity:

"This has been one whale of a night, ma'am. I'll call myself a liar whenever I wake up and think about it at sea."

"You will be sure to come and see us again?" asked Miss Penfield, a little anxiously.

"If I have to swim for it, so help me," answered "Bull" Maddock.

He stood looking at the house after she had vanished within, not in sentimental rapture, but as one whose soul was filled with amazed gratitude. Then he trudged in the direction of the harbor in the faint hope that he might be able to return to his ship. At a twist of a small, darkened street he saw, by the glimmer of an overhead light, a man approaching whose uniform was unmistakably that of an American naval officer. More than this, "Bull" Maddock was able to identify him as the skipper of the *Albacore*, Lieutenant-Commander "Dusty" Duncan. Maddock himself was screened by the gloom and he could have stepped aside and waited.

It was the opportunity which his brooding hatred had yearned for, the chance to satisfy his grudge and go undetected. To knock the skipper senseless and then kick him in the face or ribs — this would have been the procedure of the "Bull" Maddock who had raged through Front Street and the Barbary Coast. It was not only because he happened to be sober now that he let the lieutenant-commander pass unscathed. He had given his word to Miss Penfield that he would go to the Y.M.C.A. for his next liberty, and he proposed to earn it by good conduct. And beating up his skipper did n't seem to be playing square with the lady. "Bull" Maddock could not have reasoned it clearly for you, but such a deed of violence was not the proper way of finishing an evening of unheard-of satisfaction.

"She would n't like it," he reflected, breathing heavily as he resumed the march to the landing-

stage. "Ladies like her don't understand the rough stuff."

Alas, there was no boat to carry him off to the *Albacore*, and he loitered forlornly, vainly trying to explain his plight to the crew of a French torpedo-boat. At length, he found a hotel and turned in for the rest of the night, but slept poorly. It was eight o'clock next morning when he reported aboard in the old, surly humor, feeling that every man's hand was against him. The gaze of the righteous Spencer Lucas was reproachful and his greeting distant. He assumed, of course, that the black sheep had been shamefully drunk as announced beforehand. The commanding officer held the same opinion when he summoned the culprit aft.

"Anything to say for yourself?" asked "Dusty" Duncan, very peppery and disgusted.

"Not a word, sir," glowered "Bull" Maddock.

"No excuse for overstaying liberty? I thought you might try to fake up a new story, but you are too dumb for that. I'm sorry, my man. I'd like to hear you say you were sober, even if I could n't believe it."

"I ain't framin' up no alibi, sir. Nobody ever saw me squeal on taking my medicine."

Strange that although "Bull" Maddock had not the slightest conception of the code of a gentleman, something told him that it was dirty work to drag a lady's name into a mess like this or to use her as a shield. Stolidly he stood and listened to the penalty of liberty stopped. Cheap at the price, said the of-

fender to himself, as he recalled his rôle of a guardian to the winsome Miss Penfield, but he hated "Dusty" Duncan rather more than less.

Disaster came when least expected in the game which the Navy played off the coast of France. The *Albacore* sailed soon after this to escort a group of empty transports and see them well on their homeward way. Safely the gallant yacht performed her task and was heading back for port when a torpedo hit her almost amidships in the dark of a windy night. It was a chance shot for the prowling U-boat which happened to poke up a periscope at precisely the right time and place. Unseen by the vigilant gun crews and lookouts of the *Albacore*, the pirate submarine launched the missile at less than a thousand yards.

The yacht seemed to fly to pieces, to disintegrate. Her structure was too fragile to withstand the rending detonation in her vitals. And yet in these moments of hideous destruction the discipline and the spirit of the Navy held these young bluejackets steady. They tried to do what they had been taught, to carry on as long as the deck floated under their feet. Those who were not instantly killed obeyed the orders of their officers and thought not of their own salvation.

Down in the fire-room, "Bull" Maddock had leaped for a ladder, dragging and thrusting Spencer Lucas up ahead of him. The black water was boiling over the plates even as they fled. The coal bunkers had protected them against death, given them a brief

respite, and instead of being torn to pieces most of the men of the watch were able to scramble to the deck. When they reached it, the yacht was about to plunge under. The boats had been cut away, life rafts shoved overside, and men were jumping into the water to escape the suction of the drowning ship. There were few cries for help. They took it grimly, as in the day's work, and blindly trusted to the luck of the Navy.

"Bull" Maddock dived from the shattered bulwark and came up clear of the wreckage, swimming powerfully with an overhand stroke.

Colliding with a floating bit of woodwork, he clung to it with one hand and steadily forged ahead in the direction of a boat which showed the gleam of a flashlight. The boat was moving away from him, however, and he scorned to yell after it.

"Jammed full already and probably leakin' like a basket," he muttered. "They won't be lookin' for more passengers."

The yacht foundered with a great hissing of steam and the ocean was dotted with the men hidden in the profound obscuration of the cloudy sky. Most of them were slowly collecting together on the rafts or in the boats which had not been destroyed, but a few like "Bull" Maddock were farther away and therefore undiscovered. He was not greatly troubled. Help would come after a while and he could hang on until daylight. It was lonely, however, and when he decided to shout, the other castaways off to windward failed to hear him.

He was pleased when another voice answered his hail and he paddled closer, but the call became so faint that he almost lost it. Then he changed his course and fairly bumped into a man who was swimming without even a life-belt. Recognition was mutual. Feebly, but with a note of cheer in it, Lieutenant-Commander "Dusty" Duncan piped up:

"Maddock, is it? I heard you grunt and cuss just now. How are you making it?"

"Fine and dandy, sir," answered the fireman, by no means cordial. "It's a hell of a long swim to port."

"Right you are. Our people have drifted away from us. I went down with the ship — she was in such a blazing hurry to plunge under — and I reckon they thought I was done for."

"You're in a bad fix now," declared Maddock. "Grab hold of this piece of bulkhead of mine. I've a good mind to shove you under, but it don't seem quite fair."

"Oh, don't put yourself out if you feel that way," murmured the undaunted skipper.

"You surely have treated me raw," asserted Maddock. "It 'ud serve you right. Here, you shrimp, lay hold of this raft of mine."

Duncan laughed and obeyed orders. They floated a little while, but the weight of the two men was sagging the bit of bulkhead under water and Maddock perceived that the commander had almost no strength left. Swearing in a scandalous manner, the fireman looped his leather belt about Duncan's

shoulders and caught it over a spike in the broken timber. Then the giant of the stoke-hole, impervious to cold and exposure, loosened his own grip of the wretched little raft and swam near by.

One of the boats found them two hours later, Duncan unconscious, but alive, "Bull" Maddock still afloat, although almost rigid. Soon after daybreak a French patrol boat gathered them up and fled back to their own port to give them over to the care of the American admiral. The radio carried the news, and a crowd from the other yachts was waiting to welcome the survivors of the *Albacore*. Some were put into ambulances, but "Bull" Maddock walked down the gangway. With him was Spencer Lucas, pallid and limping, but anxious to be sent to another ship.

Lieutenant-Commander "Dusty" Duncan made a brave attempt to carry it off, but his gait wobbled and the navigator steadied him with an arm until they were on the wharf. The skipper of the *Albacore* sat down upon a coil of hawser to watch his men brought ashore. Presently he turned and jumped to his feet, all pain and weariness forgotten. A woman, charming and youthful, was hastening toward him and the light in her face was very wonderful. Those who saw them meet were tactful enough to look elsewhere, but "Bull" Maddock stared rudely, with his mouth open. Miss Penfield kissed the lieutenant-commander and he seemed not in the least surprised.

"My Gawd, what do you think of that?" muttered "Bull" Maddock.

"They are engaged to be married, you big simp,"

chided the scholarly Spencer Lucas. "Everybody knows that. It happened before they left home."

The fireman grinned, groped with the problem, and announced with great good-humor:

"Listen, kid! I've been tryin' to dope out what kind of a present I could give her. She was good to me, all right. This looks as if I win, for in giving her the skipper I guess I made a hit."

THE NET RESULT

"THIS here war is no place for a nervous man," casually remarked a large, melancholy bluejacket who tottered under the weight of another sand-bag.

"You said something. There's times when you're almost lucid," replied a runt of a boatswain's mate as he halted to shift his own burden and incidentally to wipe his nose. "It don't quite fit in with my notions of a sailor-man's job, but ours not to wonder why, as the poet observed. Unless you want to get blown clean off the map to-night, you big loafer, my advice is to put your back into it and shove her along."

They trudged onward to join their comrades who carried planks and rusted plates of sheet-iron as well as sand-bags, while other squads sweated with shovel and mattock. The winter rain pelted and drenched them, whipped by a gale which lashed the shallow harbor of Dunkirk into muddy froth and compelled the brave little trawlers to forsake their task of mine-sweeping and come rolling in for shelter. Between the basins where the vessels were moored against the walls of masonry there was a small area of wharfage now tenanted by several shacks and barracks of rough lumber above which snapped a frayed ensign, the Stars and Stripes.

What chiefly interested the toiling draft of a hundred and fifty men from the American Navy was the completion of a bomb-proof refuge spacious enough

to contain all hands. Just why the higher powers should have elected to establish a seaplane base in this forlorn and battered port of the French coast was beyond their understanding, but they felt a lively regard for the safety of their own skins and therefore they were digging themselves in with the most earnest zeal. The lieutenant in command, spattered with mud from his rubber boots to the disreputable blouse, showed them how to cover the roof with four feet of sand and a final layer of boiler plate. He was an energetic young man, incurably cheerful, who seemed not in the least dismayed at the prospect of being bombed from the air almost every night.

By way of courtesy a captain of the British naval air service from the vast station a little way inland had called to offer his services, serenely commenting:

“But this is a beastly place to set up shop, my dear Lieutenant Bevans — down here among the docks. You will be bombed out of it inside thirty days. The French tried it — a seaplane station right in this same spot — but they were mopped up and had to chuck it. The Boche air squadrons follow the coast line and they can find the docks even in a dark night.”

“Thanks for the advice, sir,” replied Lieutenant “Chuck” Bevans, with that engaging grin of his, “but I’ll have to play the cards as they lie. Do you care to look at our dugout? We flatter ourselves that it is quite the latest thing. The French admiral approves, and he ought to know, for he’s been living underground in Dunkirk for three years on end.”

The British captain gravely inspected the armored mound and crawled into the damp, gloomy cavern. Then he visited the rough sheds in which the American sailors were quartered and glanced at the huge tent that covered a few obsolete seaplanes borrowed from the French. He lingered to chat in the small room where the lieutenant lived, or rather camped, with a stove and a cot, while the rain beat in through the seaward wall. From a window they could discern, dim and sad in the shrouding weather, the shattered outlines of the buildings which marched along the harbor-side of Dunkirk, roofless, tortured, here and there a gap that marked obliteration. They indicated the suffering of a city which had incessantly endured bombardment, from the air, from the land, from the sea, whose spirit was unbroken, whose people proudly defied the enemy.

In the foreground, alongside the stone quay, towered two of the British monitors, uncouth, enormous, whose business it was to hurl fifteen-inch shells into Ostend and Zeebrugge. The captain of the British naval air service glanced at the wisp of White Ensign that flew from the stern of a monitor and nodded to the American lieutenant, with one of his rare smiles.

"That is the answer, Bevans — why you chaps are here, what, what? To show that we stand together, the lot of us, until the war is won?"

"I think that is why we Yanks were dumped into Dunkirk, sir," answered "Chuck" Bevans. "The French seemed pleased about it, and so do your people."

“Good luck to you, and don’t forget to leg it into that swagger dugout of yours when you hear the alarm signal.”

The captain motored back to the château where he lived with his staff and his servants, and from which he directed the operations of scores of fighting planes and an army comprising five thousand mechanics and airmen. At dinner he was even less loquacious than usual, but at length he looked up to say to his personal aide:

“I did my duty and warned the American naval chap. Of course if he has to put a base in Dunkirk, there is no other place where his seaplanes can take off, but, my word, it’s plain suicide.”

“What has he got for equipment? Crude, I fancy,” said the other.

“Rather. No machines of their own — three or four dud French busses that will drown their crews — a few huts to live in — a couple of young officers, ensigns, as the flying force.”

“Not much to brag about,” replied the aide. “The American Navy had better pull up its socks.”

“Ah, but you miss the point,” exclaimed the captain. “We have had three years to build up our air service. And we were pretty rotten at the first of it. These Americans didn’t wait to get their stuff turned out. They jumped ashore at Dunkirk with what they had, as an evidence of good faith. It bucked me up a lot, just to look ’em over. The spirit of the thing! That counts. Here’s hoping they dodge the bombs until they get a run for their money.”

A few nights after this, Lieutenant "Chuck" Bevans, his two ensigns, and his hundred and fifty bluejackets tumbled out when the sirens shrieked and scrambled into their cavern while the Boche planes droned overhead and let fall the wicked projectiles that exploded with terrifying concussions and great flashes of flame. Although aimed at the docks and the shipping, most of them went wide of the mark, smashing through dwelling-houses or tearing holes in the pavement. A British cargo steamer was demolished no more than a hundred yards from the American naval base and another bomb glanced from the sloping roof of the dugout.

There followed a week of clear weather with light winds, and the enemy squadrons visited Dunkirk every night, unloading their infernal freightingage with more enthusiasm than accuracy, but managing to slay many women and children in the town, blowing the stern off an anchored French destroyer, and making life most unhappy for the Yankee sailormen. One barracks building was splintered and a chasm of a hole marked the site of the shack in which the lieutenant had lived the simple life. He began to wonder about that thirty-day limit. There might be something in the prediction. The loss of sleep was also trying to the nerves. A man could n't keep it up indefinitely — working hard all day and crowding into a filthy dugout after dark while the cursed tumult sounded as though the world was tumbling about his ears.

The two ensigns were impatient and displayed irri-

tation. This preliminary programme was stupid. The lieutenant was awaiting the arrival of additional aviators before beginning the regular patrol against the German submarines in the Channel. Meanwhile the routine comprised a great deal of drudgery and no retaliation. The unhappy brace of ensigns were permitted to undertake practice flights in a French seaplane by way of learning how to rise from the narrow lane of water between the docks, a hazardous performance which risked an unholy crash at every attempt. Enviously they watched the British naval airmen soar far out to sea in their little fighting machines or heard their yarns of U-boats detected and reported to the surface fleets of destroyers, trawlers, and drifters which hastened to administer the deadly depth bomb in a warfare that gave no quarter.

"What do you say to suggesting it to Bevans?" said Ensign Robert Carnahan, hopefully addressing his partner. "It is n't as if we were green at the game. We had a solid year's training at home before we came to France and I'll bet we can fly with any of these birds on patrol duty."

"He says he needs us ashore," was the gloomy reply, "and he is none too keen about drowning us until he gets more help."

"But if we stick around this dump much longer, Bob, we'll never get action. The old Boche mighty near scuppered the outfit last night. Man, he fairly ringed us with bombs. He is liable to score a touchdown before we beat it into the dugout one of these fine evenings and there won't be enough left of two

promising young aviators to make a funeral. I am certainly fed up with Dunkirk."

"You're on, Al. We'll put it up to Bevans at supper. One little war flight and we promise to be good."

The weary lieutenant, who was a Regular Navy man, inured to thankless duties and rigid discipline, knew what was in the minds of these boyish Reserve ensigns. To them the war was a sporting adventure. "Bob" Carnahan had been a football player of campus renown and "Al" Chew had pitched illustriously for the nine of another university. All they yearned for now was an opportunity to prove themselves, to gain a brief and glorious respite from the routine of the day's work. Lieutenant "Chuck" Bevans, condemned to serve as a head carpenter, mechanic, and taskmaster, smiled tolerantly as he observed the ensigns nudge each other and whisper at the supper-table.

"How did the old boat tune up to-day?" he inquired.

"Smooth as a Swiss watch," Carnahan eagerly assured him. "Plenty of pep, and a child could have handled her."

"Some ship," put in Ensign Chew. "She did ninety knots and was just jogging."

"What about machine-gun practice?" pursued the lieutenant.

"We are really good, sir," modestly answered "Bob" Carnahan. "If we are ever lucky enough to meet a German plane, I'll bet I can shoot the eyebrows off the Fritzies."

"I presume you are a hundred per cent plus at bombing submarines," amiably observed their commander.

"Well, we let go four dummies to-day," came from Ensign Alfred Chew, "and every one of 'em would have put a hole through your hat."

"You *are* a couple of shrinking violets. It's all wasted, though, for I made up my mind to —"

"To turn down our request," mourned Ensign Carnahan.

"We thought you might let us give Fritz one good dusting," echoed Ensign Chew.

"Stow the gab and listen, you noisy infants," rudely exclaimed Lieutenant Bevans. "I made up my mind to-day to give you a war flight. I expect to 'phone the British station to-night and arrange for a specified patrol area. You will be ready to flop at daylight and the Lord have mercy on your souls."

The ensigns beamed and decorously refrained from cheering. They decided to turn in early and garner all the sleep possible, hoping the Boche planes might take a night off, but a visitor appeared in the person of a French "ace" on leave in Dunkirk. He was a sal-low, low-spirited young man in spite of the honors emblazoned on his tunic — palms, stars, and crosses in incredible profusion. The conversation stumbled because he spoke no English, but it was obvious that he regarded the war flight of the bold ensigns with a tinge of pessimism.

Their machine? He knew the type well. For active service it required aviators of profound experience.

In the hands of beginners, alas, there had been many fatalities along the French coast. Flying far out over the sea was a different matter — here the resplendent ace shrugged a shoulder and his gesture was sinister. If only the Americans could wait for their own seaplanes with which they were so much more familiar! Ceremoniously he wished them good fortune, although plainly expecting the worst, and stalked out into the gloom.

“A merry guy, that,” murmured Ensign Carnahan as he smothered a yawn. “He will be all upset if we come back alive. I hate to disappoint him.”

“He had to begin, did n’t he, Bob? These wise birds have been at it so long that they can’t remember anything else.”

The weather next morning was uncommonly kind, a bright sky with a light breeze which dispelled the Channel mist. The French trawlers were plodding seaward to sweep their appointed routes and a division of British destroyers fled from the harbor on some mysterious errand of their own. Lieutenant Bevans inspected the seaplane with the most scrupulous care before he ordered the waiting squad of blue-jackets to lower it from the slip-way into the basin. It was, in fact, a flying boat, with a whaleback hull and a wing spread of eighty feet.

Ensign Carnahan crawled into the pilot’s seat forward and “Al” Chew tucked himself into the cockpit aft, where he acted as observer and manipulated the machine gun. Upon a chart were laid out their courses and bearings for the patrol tour, and they had

rejoiced to find that they were to swing toward the Belgian coast where there was always the chance of encountering an enemy plane or two on scouting duty. Sternly Lieutenant Bevans informed them that they were not to go surging off in search of trouble. Air combats were not their particular job. They were, first of all, to patrol for enemy submarines and help safeguard the lanes of merchant traffic. The ensigns blithely promised obedience and then the roar of the propeller cut short the farewells.

The graceful machine skittered over the surface of the water, flinging clouds of spray, swiftly gathered flying speed, and rose clear, climbing a thousand feet before it swerved to the northward. The engine sang powerfully without miss or falter. The two ensigns were buoyantly happy. No more than a few minutes had passed when they were able to descry the flat shore of Belgium, scarcely distinguishable from the sea, and the hazy mass of buildings and tall chimneys identified as Ostend. Mere specks against the sky, two enemy planes hovered above the enslaved city from whose harbor the German submarines crept out on their infamous business. Reluctantly "Bob" Carnahan steered wide to sweep farther away from the coast, toward the middle of Dover Strait. Bombing Ostend was the job of the squadrons of huge Handley-Page machines from the British station at Dunkirk and they attended to it exceedingly well.

Keen-eyed, vigilant, the two ensigns scrutinized the sea which unrolled far beneath them like a brown carpet flecked with little flashes of foam, for once un-

vexed by boisterous winds. Crowded transports and grimy cargo boats were traversing the highway between England and France, moving in safety because the naval power of Germany was impotent to thwart them. Toy-like, the fleets of drifters and destroyers steamed restlessly to and fro on the surface patrol. The ambushed U-boats, however, appeared to be engaged elsewhere, for there was never the glint of a periscope with the telltale furrow spreading in its wake, or the glimpse of a conning tower as it broke water.

An empty quest for the American air patrol, but such was the fortune of war, and one could not reasonably hope to bag a submarine every day! Before the eager ensigns realized it, they had been in the air two hours and soon they would have to be winging it back to port. The breeze was a trifle stronger, they noticed, and the sky had become overcast. This winter weather was apt to be treacherous. Carnahan eyed the sodden cloud-banks which were massing swiftly, and a gust brought a spatter of rain. He turned to wave a hand at his comrade in the rear cockpit and Ensign Chew nodded assent. Another gale might be brewing in the Channel and the rain and mist were apt to close down like a curtain.

Soon after the course was laid for Dunkirk the coast became invisible, obscured in gray vapor, and Carnahan studied his compass with some slight uneasiness. Rapidly the task of holding the flying boat true to the proper bearings became more difficult. The wind had shifted so that it caught the sensitive

craft on the beam instead of ahead, and she drifted away to leeward while the hull swayed and plunged to the lift and swoop of the wide wings. To ease the strain the pilot was compelled to steer dead into the wind whenever the sudden flurries whistled through the struts with a menacing note. Instead of holding a bee-line for Dunkirk, the laboring craft was blown toward the wider reaches of the Channel and the sense of direction was confused now that the landmarks were invisible.

The engine had behaved well until now, but the excessive vibration seemed to portend trouble. The boat was not new and this ordeal of rough weather was testing every part to the uttermost. Carnahan was warned by the irregular pulsation of the motor, the break in the rhythm, and a perceptible loss of power. He could not leave his station, but Ensign Chew, also suspecting a mishap, was desperately attempting to investigate the engine while he hung on by his eyelids and displayed the agility of an acrobat. Presently the mechanical malady revealed alarming symptoms. The motor almost died and picked up again with a languid flutter. The craft coasted toward the sea in a long slant, recovered itself, flew on an even keel for a short distance, and again dipped downward.

Near at hand the water was seen to be perilously rough. There was no choice, however, and after a final struggle to climb clear, the unlucky cruiser, no longer a flying boat, poked her blunt nose into a white-crested wave and tried to submerge entirely.

The next sea washed over the hull, half-filling it. The shock of the first impact was so violent that the two ensigns were pitched forward, and while they groped to recover themselves the salt water almost strangled them. Surprised at finding the old boat still intact and afloat, they sputtered and swore and baled furiously with canvas buckets. The boat was making a gallant battle for survival, breasting the waves more staunchly than the castaways had dared to hope. The motion was wild and dizzy, one wing dipping under while the other reared skyward, and the spray broke in sheets over the plunging hull, but the fragile structure somehow held together and refused to fill and founder.

Ensign Alfred Chew crawled forward, shook the water from helmet and goggles, and shouted in his shipmate's ear:

"Are we down-hearted? It was the gasoline feed-pipe — cracked and then jarred off close to the pump. A clean break and there's no mending it. You can't tape it. And pitching about on our heads this way we can't get the bally thing apart."

"Right you are, Al. And never a vessel in sight to pick us up. The place was alive with 'em a little while ago. Better get a pigeon started right away."

The boat lacked wireless equipment, but the two precious pigeons, although sadly bedraggled, had escaped drowning, and Ensign Chew extracted one from the small box and warmed and caressed it while Carnahan scribbled the message for help and slipped it into the aluminum cartridge which they clasped on

the bird's leg. It fluttered in a dazed manner when released, hovered over the drifting machine, flew in a zigzag course for a minute or two, and then sped in the direction of Dunkirk.

"We'll let the other one go in an hour or so if we are still messing about here," said Carnahan. "Fish out the thermos bottle and the sandwiches, Al. In this thick weather we are liable to be hard to find."

They ate and drank with frugal care, reserving part of the emergency ration. Drenched and chilled to the bone, such exposure as this must soon exhaust their vitality. Huddled together in the forward cockpit they began sending up distress signals, using green Véry lights which, in clear weather, might have been visible for several miles. In this gray smother of mist and rain and spindrift, however, such signals were pitifully futile. The boat was wrenched and twisted by the immense leverage of wings which yawed and tripped in an insane see-saw. It seemed as though they must be torn from the hull, leaving it to capsize. There was neither sight nor sound of shipping and the steady pressure of the wind was carrying them down the Channel.

"That French ace with the chronic grouch did n't guess so far wrong," admitted Ensign Chew between his chattering teeth. "He was a Jonah. I did n't like his make-up."

"Aces?" exclaimed Carnahan with a feeble grin. "We are the original pair of two-spots. That dugout of ours looks like a cozy corner to me."

Talk was infrequent for some time after this. Shiv-

ering, benumbed, they baled the cockpit at intervals and stared into the gloomy weather, silently wondering how long they could hope to live through such a tragic ordeal as this. They were Navy men, but with little experience afloat, and the wretched motion of their derelict craft afflicted them with seasickness. They were unspeakably miserable, too much so to be frightened.

The day wore on to noon. There was a bit of comfort in the fact that seas grew no worse while the wind had sensibly diminished and the sky was less somber. Survivors of torpedoed merchant ships had suffered worse things in open boats, no doubt, or washed about on rafts for days, and this occurred to the two ensigns. They had no idea of whimpering, but were grimly hanging on. If the pigeons had reached Dunkirk a vessel must have been sent out in haste, but nothing was seen of it.

"We have properly lost ourselves," said Carnahan, "and if we are picked up it will be a matter of sheer luck."

"A chilly proposition, if we have to make a night of it," replied young Chew, "but we'll stick on somehow."

The wind dropped to a harmless breeze and the sea was almost tranquil, but the wrecked seaplane floated soggily and the hull leaked like a basket. Carnahan was trying to calk a crack with strips of canvas and a pocket-knife when his comrade clutched him by the arm and hoarsely implored him to look astern. Spell-bound they gazed and their mouths hung open. En-

sign Alfred Chew rubbed his eyes and muttered strong language. "Bob" Carnahan clenched his fists and could find no words to fit his impassioned emotions.

Moving very slowly and protruding no more than two feet above the surface, a bit of metal pipe left a ripple in its wake. The upper end of it was an elbow into which was fitted a lens and the glitter of this glass disc suggested the living eye of some very formidable sea monster. It inspected the drifting sea-plane and the forlorn passengers with a scrutiny deliberate and leisurely, with a cold-blooded, impersonal detachment, pausing when abreast of the American flag which was painted on the yellow hull of the flying boat.

"You were so darned anxious to find a periscope, Bob," muttered Ensign Chew. "There it is, all right. What are you going to do with it?"

"Fritz is giving us the once-over, Al, old man. That can't be one of our own submarines or it would come up and hail us and show a little human interest. An interesting situation, is n't it?"

"You put it mildly. It is almost sensational. What's the idea? Will he stand by for the pleasure of seeing us drown, or will he ram our boat and finish the job at once?"

"You have another guess or two. He may pop up alongside and snatch us aboard as prisoners."

"I had n't thought of that," dolefully replied the other ensign. "A couple of American naval officers might be considered good hunting. That does n't ap-

peal to me, Bob. This surrender stuff is n't taught in our Service, not while your ship is afloat and under your feet."

"Here we are, with a pair of perfectly good hundred-pound bombs still hitched to our old scow and we can't drop 'em on Fritz," was Al's lament. "We might crumple his periscope with a burst from the machine gun."

"He would poke up another tube and then smash through us bows on. I wish he would either beat it or finish up his dirty work. I dislike being stared at. It makes me nervous."

The prowling U-boat had circled the crippled sea-plane by this time, still submerged as though fearing a trap. Uncanny it was to watch the creeping periscope and to picture the German officer standing at the lower end of the long tube in the brilliantly lighted compartment, perhaps jesting at the plight of the *verdammt* Yankee aviators who had sworn to destroy the so-glorious submarines of the unconquerable *Vaterland*. It was this brutal, gloating delay that infuriated the two ensigns. They were being played with as a cat torments a mouse. The thing was unsportsmanlike, inhuman, and "Bob" Carnahan was in no mood for discretion.

"We lose, Al, either way we play it," he growled. "I'd sooner drown than throw up my hands to that dirty murderer. Crawl aft to the machine gun and we'll wait for his next move. By Jove, I believe he's coming up."

The submarine showed the dripping top of the

conning tower and presently the long deck heaved in sight, the water washing over it like a bit of reef. Bold against the gray paint stood out the lettering — “U-62.” The unpleasant apparition fascinated the two ensigns. It was very much as though a bad dream had come true. For the moment they felt more curiosity than alarm. In all their glib talk of *strafing* Fritz it had not occurred to them that Fritz might take a hand at the game. He was not apt to feel kindly toward the allied seaplanes which hunted and bombed him without mercy, earnestly seeking to blow him to kingdom come with all hands.

Ensign Chew had cuddled close to his machine gun. It was obvious that he yearned to let fly at the first close-cropped German head which should show itself above the screen of the tiny bridge on top of the conning tower. “Bob” Carnahan had learned to know his companion as an impulsive youth who was likely to let the consequences go hang, and he therefore shouted a caution to hold steady and avoid trouble until the enemy had shown his hand. The vindictive Chew scowled at the U-boat and glumly obeyed orders.

They heard the clang of metal as the round hatch-plates were flung back, unsealing the submarine and opening an exit through the conning tower. There emerged into view a burly figure of a man in oilskins who wore an officer’s cap. Two sailors clambered up after him and rested their rifles upon the railing of the bridge. He raised the binoculars which hung from his neck by a strap and subjected the two castaways

to critical inspection. Then he bawled through a megaphone:

"I vill you alive take as prisoners. It iss a *gross* kindness, so? I haf not forgetted the *King Stephen* trawler what left the crew of a Zeppelin to be drowned in the Nort' Sea, but a German officer vas a gentleman always. He makes war not like the dishonorable English."

This was too much for the temper of Ensign "Bob" Carnahan who threw up his head at the challenge and shouted back:

"German gentlemen — hell! Do you think we have forgotten the *Lusitania*?"

The florid face of the submarine commander turned a richer hue as he turned and said something to the two sailors who filled the small space beside him. They stood at attention, the rifles ready for action.

"Yump in the *wasser* and swim to my boat, *sehr schnell*," was the command hurled at the American ensigns. The voice was harsh and unsteady with anger.

"We don't know how to swim," lied "Al" Chew. "You will have to send over and get us."

Carnahan had ceased to gaze at the submarine. His attention had shifted for the moment, but the horizon was still empty with nothing to indicate that a friendly vessel might intervene in time to save them. He was staring into the sea quite close at hand, but the uneasy waves merely disclosed a drifting bit of wood like a fragment of a spar. Tense and alert with some sudden excitement he passed the word to the rear cockpit:

"That's the way, Al. String him along. Play for time. Anything to keep him just where he is."

"What is the idea, Bob?"

"Never mind. I can't explain now, but there is about one chance in a hundred that we may be able to pull something off. Annoy the 'honorable German gentleman.' Insult him, and go as far as you like, but keep away from that machine gun unless he shoots first."

Again the submarine commander yelled the order to surrender by jumping into the sea, but the obstreperous Yankees persisted in debating the question. The U-boat carried a collapsible canvas skiff, argued Carnahan, and it was the plain duty of the captors to launch it and take off the prisoners, who were already exhausted and too feeble to stay afloat.

"But you haf life-jackets on yourselves, stupids!" yelled the exasperated Teuton as he snatched a rifle from a sailor and flourished it wildly.

"Filled with sawdust instead of cork! Yankee graft!" pleasantly explained Carnahan. "You have read your own newspapers, so you know all about it."

"How perfectly lovely!" applauded Ensign Chew from his end of the derelict. "The square-headed boob actually believes it. Better be ready to duck, Bob. He is sincerely peeved."

This diagnosis was accurate. Presumably to frighten them into prompt obedience, the irate commander threw up the rifle and pulled trigger. A bullet whistled over Carnahan's head and another drilled a hole in the coaming at his elbow. The result was to-

tally unlooked for aboard the German submarine. Instead of diving into the sea with a cry of "Kamerad," the impetuous Ensign Chew emitted a joyous war-whoop. The enemy had opened fire on the American flag. Tradition knew but one reply, from John Paul Jones to David Farragut. So it appeared, at least, to young Alfred Chew as he instantaneously cleared for action and sighted the machine gun to sweep the bridge of the submarine. With a vicious rat-tat-tat a stream of bullets sought the mark.

The wrecked seaplane was an unsteady gun-platform which was all that saved the German commander and his two sailors from being so many perforated ruins. A tattered wing of the aircraft tripped in a wave just as the ensign fired and the abrupt check marred his intentions. He shot a trifle low and the bullets spattered the conning tower. In a twinkling the bridge was vacant. It was incredible that a burly commander in oilskins and two sturdy German sailors could have vanished through the little round hatch without jamming together and sticking fast. By way of an encore, Ensign Chew fired another burst and lavishly punctuated the distasteful lettering — "U-62." The bullets rattled against the thin steel plating like pebbles on a tin roof.

"They can't pop out on deck again," hopefully observed the American gunner. "The lid is on that outfit. But I'm afraid I have spilled the beans, Bob, old man. You told me to sit tight and wait 'em out. I just could n't help cutting loose when he tried to pot you,"

"Thanks. I don't believe you have spoiled the show," Carnahan replied, with an unruffled mien. "We could n't have beguiled him with conversation any longer. He turned nasty. You have bottled them up, sure enough. Not a man of them will dare to lift a hatch to get out and serve a gun. And they won't care to waste an expensive torpedo on us."

"He will ram us right away, then. Nothing doing with my machine gun. A can-opener would be more useful."

Ensign Carnahan was again absorbed in staring at the water where the bit of painted wood still floated within range of his vision. The seaplane had drifted with the wind and the German submarine had forged a little way ahead, so that the relative positions were altered. The tossing fragment of spar, or whatever it was, now lay between the two crafts. Carnahan beckoned and Ensign Chew scrambled forward to join him. They paid no heed to the submarine which slowly gathered steerage-way under power of her surface engines.

"Yes, Fritz will ram us," said Carnahan, as though thinking aloud, "but he is n't a bit anxious to drown the pair of us. He may be under orders, as I figure it out, to capture any American naval officers alive. He behaves that way, at any rate. So if he comes ahead to smash our old boat into kindling he will move at slow speed and then try to fish us up out of the wet."

"Good dope," agreed Ensign Chew. "That machine gun of ours makes it impossible for him to turn

the trick in any other way. Too good to be true, Bob, but it does look to me as if we had a chance to win. You're bright."

"Watch it, Al! Look sharp! When the next wave breaks, just beyond the floating stick," breathlessly exclaimed Carnahan.

Close to the surface there appeared for an instant what looked like a string of croquet balls, for shape and size. They were linked together in some manner, rising, then dipping, invisible excepting for such a fleeting glimpse as this. The ensigns looked out to measure the course of the submarine which was turning in a wide arc to point her bow at the helpless seaplane. Yes, the stratagem of delay had been nicely timed. Wind and tide had set the three factors of the equation in the proper relative positions. Carnahan had maneuvered against almost hopeless odds, but the gods of chance were kind to him and the luck of the American Navy held good.

"Slow, Fritzie! Left rudder now, and then straight ahead," implored "Al" Chew, his weather-cracked lips quivering with excitement.

"He can't miss it now," croaked Carnahan. "Our side is turned square toward him, and that's where he wants to hit and rip the old bus wide open. I'll bet you a hundred even he never gets here."

"You're on, Bob. It would be a pleasure to lose. *Oh, boy!* Here he comes, dead on the mark, and as wicked as sin!"

The long gray hull of the predatory U-boat was moving sluggishly while the sea frothed across the

deck. It displayed no indications of human life or guidance. Monstrous, slinking, it profaned the brave and manly traditions of blue water. The youthful American officers, forgetting how cold and wet and fatigued they were, oblivious even of the grave peril that menaced them, watched the enemy draw near. They were, in fact, supremely happy, for this was the great adventure, the sporting chance.

"Supposing the scheme does n't work," whispered Chew. "It may fail to connect."

"Then it's good-night," said Carnahan. He gulped as he spoke.

The U-boat was drawing near the tossing bit of spar and that curious string of little globes fastened all in a row which so closely resemble croquet balls. To the German commander and the helmsman behind the thick bull's-eye windows of the conning tower these harmless particles of flotsam were no doubt invisible. Undeviatingly the submarine held its course until the swaying, half-submerged row of balls were directly athwart the rounded bow. "Bob" Carnahan clasped his comrade around the neck and they danced in water up to their knees.

The nose of the submarine surged under between two waves and picked up the odd cluster of balls. They clung to the deck instead of being washed off and many more of them appeared, dragged from beneath the surface, fathom after fathom all linked together in a meshwork of tarred cords. And attached to this system of floats was a vast net fashioned of wire cable which had been suspended deep down in

the sea. It trailed past the sides of the submarine and wrapped itself about the hull before the startled German commander could realize the danger or reverse his engines.

The net clung to its quarry like the tentacles of an octopus. It was strongly, cunningly fashioned, yet so light and pliant that it entangled itself with any moving object unlucky enough to encounter the trap. In this instance the net accomplished what was expected of it, for the submarine failed to check its headway until the whirling propellers had become wound up in the tenacious fabric. The predicament was precisely like that of a fly in a spider's web. To struggle was to make matters so much worse. The destruction of the wrecked seaplane had ceased to interest the German officers and crew.

"I win a hundred off you," cried "Bob" Carnahan, pounding his friend on the back. "We pulled it off — so far — but here's hoping and praying for the second act."

"If he has sense enough to stay quiet, just as he is, the beggar can set his men to hacking away with axes and maybe clear himself," anxiously suggested Ensign Chew. "I guess I had better put a crimp in that little stunt."

He hastily returned to his machine gun and trained it on the conning tower, thereby anticipating the movements of the German crew. One of them cautiously raised his head above the bridge screen and young Chew riddled the strip of canvas with a rattling fusillade. It was to be conjectured that exposure of

this kind was indubitably fatal. The attempt to gain the deck was unanimously abandoned.

"We have bagged a submarine, but we don't know what to do with it," complained Carnahan. "I might swim over and ask 'em to surrender, but what's the use? I am still expecting the grand finale, but it seems to be delayed or something."

"He will fill his tanks and submerge," argued Chew. "He can drop down forty or fifty feet and let the sweep of the tide carry him clear of us and our nifty machine gun. Then he can come up and try to cut himself clear, or maybe he'll sit on the bottom until dark."

"If he does n't drag that little spar buoy under with him he will be out of luck. It will give our surface patrols a clue to locate him. The buoy caught my eye first thing. That was how I happened to look for the net. I saw the Admiralty shops at Dover where they manufacture the stuff — went all through 'em with a British Navy pal."

They beheld the baffled U-boat sink lower until the deck had vanished and the conning tower was lapped by the sea. With negative buoyancy established, the commander risked starting his motors in order that a thrust ahead might give his boat a downward slant and so carry her to the desired depth. Possibly he hoped that the screws might thresh themselves clear of the enveloping net. Apparently the attempt was successful. The conning tower, then the slender periscopes, moving slowly, were seen to pass from sight and the sea boiled white to mark the plunge.

Ensign Carnahan sighed, ungratefully ignoring the fact that he had just gained his liberty and perhaps his life.

“Would n’t that break your heart, Al? He belonged to us. You see, I felt absolutely certain that he was going to blow himself up — once he ran afoul of that net. The British have invented a new mine for this special purpose — a cute little package of TNT which is tied to the bottom of the nets, about fifty feet apart. They explode on contact. I watched a hundred women putting ’em together in Dover. Maybe this net of ours had no mines on it. If a U-boat so much as touches one of these contraptions when she gets wrapped up in a net, it’s —”

A terrific explosion flung the two young men headlong. The concussion fairly lifted the water-logged hull of the seaplane. It simply fell apart like a watermelon dropped on a pavement. Bewildered, the two ensigns found themselves swimming amid the wreckage. Freed of the weight of the engine, a side of the boat came bobbing up and floated as a raft to which Carnahan clung. Chew attached himself to a part of the bow in which the air chamber was intact. They lashed these fragments together and managed to haul their bodies half out of water. During this struggle for existence they were conscious that the sea was tremendously agitated, churned into muddy whirlpools which subsided in greasy combers that rolled without breaking. The air reeked with the heavy smell of crude oil and a dirty litter of *débris* was smeared over a slowly spreading area.

"Bob" Carnahan dashed the spray from his eyes and vainly looked for survivors of the U-62. It was Ensign Chew who first caught sight of a body, which was washing past him no more than a dozen yards distant. Dead, of course, he concluded, but one arm seemed to move of its own volition and the man was floating face upward. The ensign recognized the commander of the lost submarine and swam to reach him. Carnahan splashed in his wake and together they supported the insensible German until he could be towed to the rude raft and lifted thereupon. His head was badly gashed and he breathed ever so feebly, but there was life in him.

Fortunately the succor so long delayed was now close at hand. The castaways could not have lived through another hour in this icy water. They had come to the end of their strength. It was a British destroyer that sighted them and approached cautiously, as though picking a course, instead of tearing along at its usual foaming gait. A boat was lowered and the sympathetic seamen were about to lift Ensign "Bob" Carnahan over the gunwale when he hoarsely protested:

"The prisoner first, if you please, and be mighty careful of him. He is the net result."

Whisked aboard the destroyer, the two ensigns were thawed out beside the ward-room stove. The skipper insisted that they be tucked into bed, but they politely refused, and in borrowed clothes they told their wondrous yarn to a group of rosy young officers.

"We have been looking for you all over the place," explained one of them. "A pigeon of yours got back to Dunkirk. You drifted a lot, I presume, and — er — we never dreamed of finding you just here, don't you know."

"My message may have given the wrong bearings," Carnahan admitted, with a blush. "I was n't quite sure of my position after the weather turned so thick and squally. Just where were we when you found us, may I ask?"

The destroyer officers appeared highly amused at this, and the navigator chuckled as he explained:

"Inside the net barrage that was laid to catch the Huns if they try to go down Channel. We were keeping clear of it, do you see, when we heard an explosion —"

"That was U-62. We noticed it ourselves," said Ensign Alfred Chew.

"Right-o. The blighter must have touched off a mine while he was messing about in the nets. That is the trick of it. And you chaps actually coaxed him into blowing himself to blazes! My word! How extraordinarily clever!"

"Carnahan did it," modestly affirmed Ensign Chew.

"Snappy work with the machine gun really did the business for Fritz," loyally exclaimed "Bob." "It got his goat, and then we had him where we wanted him."

Before the hurrying destroyer reached Dunkirk the surgeon reported that the captured commander of U-62 would probably recover from his injuries.

He had already revived and was able to talk a little. It was to be inferred that he held an extremely low opinion of a nation which would employ such dastardly contrivances against the gallant submarines of the Imperial German Navy. As for the Yankee aviators he regretted that he had not sunk them at sight instead of behaving too gently and honorably.

Lieutenant "Chuck" Bevans, weary with the day's work, was at the mooring berth when the destroyer slipped into the basin. Darkness had fallen over the shattered, melancholy seaport of Dunkirk. The good news had been sent him by wireless, and as his haggard but exultant brace of youngsters limped out the gangway he shook hands with them and exclaimed:

"Well done! These Britishers credit you with the destruction of a big, seagoing sub. It means a decoration or two. Wow, but I am glad to get you back alive and kicking. I cursed myself all day for letting you go."

"There was no need of worrying about us," grandly replied Ensign Carnahan. "We had a perfectly bully time, did n't we, Al?"

"You said it for me, Bob. This is the end of a perfect day."

They trudged in the direction of their humble quarters among the stone quays and passed the long, low mound with the roof of sand-bags and boiler plate. In all likelihood they would be scrambling into the dugout a few hours later, for the sky had cleared and the stars were out.

"This is home, sweet home," murmured Ensign Carnahan, "and it's plenty good enough for me. I surely do pity the poor guys in the Service who can't get overseas duty."

Ensign Alfred Chew breathed a long sigh of contentment. With a glance at the shining stars overhead, he responded:

"Well, if the darned old Boche comes over tonight, I think we have given him a pretty fair excuse for bombing us."

THE LAST SHOT

IT was drill all day for the battleship fleet and target practice at night, with hordes of recruits pouring in from the naval training stations. They had very many things to learn before they could be rated as real seamen. The petty officers grumbled while they sweated, but it was not because their fighting battle-wagons had been turned into kindergartens for infant bluejackets. Hard work could never dismay them so long as they were helping to get on with the war. Their grievance amounted to an affliction. The destroyers were racing across to mix it up with the enemy, one flotilla after another steaming out of Hampton Roads to vanish on the long trail to the eastward. Even a flock of yachts had been sent to the coast of France — guns hastily mounted, luxurious fittings plucked out by the roots, crews of green Reserves flung aboard at the navy-yard.

And here were the big ships, the strength of the Navy, ships that were ready and eager to meet any foe on blue water, gun for gun — fated to cruise up and down the Atlantic coast like so many excursion steamers or to ride at their mooring buoys three thousand miles from the war. That the British Grand Fleet had been knocking about the North Sea for three years at this same dreary business, or waiting and hoping at a base in the misty Orkneys, was small consolation.

Of the grim super-dreadnoughts which flew the Stars and Stripes, the flagship was the latest and the most powerful, with an "E" painted on her turrets to show that her fourteen-inch guns had won the fleet record for smashing a speck of a target at a ten-mile range. The activities within her steel walls where dwelt twelve hundred men were manifold and wonderfully organized, but their supreme purpose was to punish the enemy in battle and this could be done only by straight shooting and hard hitting. The gun crews of the flagship, from the pointers to the plugmen and shell-handlers, could not be blamed for regarding their work as more important than anything else on board.

Owen Kirby, chief gunner's mate, was a turret captain of this crack ship. The perfection of team play required of his men surpassed that of a championship 'varsity eleven. It was the human equation exquisitely efficient and coördinated which, after all, enabled the mighty mechanism of steel to be operated with such speed and accuracy. In number one turret they jumped when Owen Kirby spoke, because he was the man for the job. When these lithe lads stripped to the waist and the powder bags were rammed home, it was the chief gunner's mate to whom they looked as the leader rather than the youthful officer who commanded them.

Clean and trim and hard, Kirby looked the part. The American Navy had stamped him as its own and he would have made a splendid figure for a recruiting poster. He conveyed an impression of dis-

ciplined young manhood, alert, courageous, and dependable. Now a man in a battleship turret lives and toils in such intimate contact with his comrades that he cannot deceive them by ever so little nor can he hide his faults no matter how trifling. It was obvious that Kirby had an excellent opinion of himself; nothing annoying in the way of brag or bluster, but a sort of gentlemanly self-satisfaction. When his shipmates mentioned it among themselves, the good-natured verdict was that the spruce turret captain did not hate himself. When ashore he visited friends whose social position was better than that to which an enlisted man of the Regular Navy was perhaps accustomed.

He felt quite certain that no one had guessed it, but all this eagerness to get across to the war zone in anything that floated had left him cold. He was contented where he was and preferred to stay there. He had always been in battleships, and the idea of banging about in a tin pot of a destroyer failed to thrill him. The comfortable living quarters, the pleasant pilgrimages in port, the distinction he enjoyed as turret captain of a flagship which held the fleet gunnery record, were very much to his taste.

There was another reason for this singular indifference to active service and her name was Louise McCrea. Her home was in Norfolk, her father a substantial ship-chandler, and her beauty so undeniable that when Owen Kirby walked with her he held his chin up as if daring all the world to take her from him. So far as it was in him he loved her

unselfishly, but in a hidden corner of his mind was the shrewd hope of quitting the Navy after the war and diverting his energies to the prosperous firm of John McCrea & Co. which was lagging for lack of young blood. The turret captain had no desire to be marooned on the other side of the Atlantic and thereby give his rivals a clear field. Absence might make the heart grow fonder, but he would rather not risk it in the case of Louise. He seemed to be making headway in her favor, but he had not yet dared to put it to the test by asking her to marry him.

It was a summer afternoon, tempered by a breeze from seaward, when he went ashore in a launch with the mail orderly, who cast an appraising eye at the immaculate white uniform which had been fitted to a hair by a Norfolk tailor, and smiled sagaciously as he remarked:

“You always do give ’em a treat when you hit the beach. Too bad the ladies are n’t allowed to visit aboard in war-time. They miss something, take it from me.”

Kirby colored and his reply was curt. Persiflage from a lowly marine ruffled his dignity. He was absorbed in his own thoughts — the ardent anticipation of seeing Louise McCrea, and a new ambition which had lately interested him — to enroll in the three months’ training course at Annapolis and win a commission as ensign for the duration of the war. Here was another argument against service in European waters. Why worry? He was too valuable a man to be taken out of his turret and shifted elsewhere.

The captain of the battleship was too proud of the gunnery record to break up the combination.

John McCrea had been to sea in his youth, and he had built a house close to the water, with a wharf and a small ketch-rigged yacht to sail for a pastime. He was puttering about on deck when Owen Kirby crossed the lawn, and the foremast hand was hoisting sail.

"Come along, young man," shouted the father of Louise. "We'll have supper down the bay and come back with the tide. The daughter will be down in a jiffy, so she says, but you know what that means."

Precious moments fled while the turret captain coiled the halliards and otherwise made himself useful. Then the adorable Louise condescended to go aboard in a leisurely manner as though it were quite proper that the party should wait on her pleasure. Owen Kirby of the ready wit and engaging demeanor was smitten with dumbness, sure symptom that he was honestly in love, while Louise McCrea twinkled mischief and read his malady. The head-sails climbed the stays and the yacht footed it nimbly out to deep water for a long reach with the bubbles tinkling in her wake. Burly John McCrea, a pipe between his teeth, stood at the wheel and bullied the foremast hand, with never a care in the world, while his daughter sat in the cockpit and talked to the stalwart turret captain who leaned against the cabin door. Her mood was unusually pensive, even a little wistful, but she did not reveal the reason until the gray battle-ships of the fleet lifted ahead like rows of citadels,

"So many men are drafted from them for foreign service, are n't they," said she. "I see their boats going and coming all day. And their wives wait at the navy-yard to say good-bye."

"Yes, they are all crazy to take a hand in the big game," agreed Owen, with more heartiness than he felt. "I heard our executive officer say he'd give a leg to get a destroyer."

"I know. I have had to say farewell to several men I knew, and it gives one a forlorn, lonely feeling. And I suppose you are moving heaven and earth to be transferred over there. A rosy cherub of an ensign dashed in yesterday and I thought he was going to turn somersaults on the grass. He had been ordered to a destroyer. He kept repeating — 'Could you beat it, Miss McCrea. Those are the boys that bat 'em high, wide, and lively.'"

"Well, it is tough luck to be stranded aboard a battleship," earnestly responded the turret captain; "but the fleet may come in handy before the war is over and some of us have to stay and keep it tuned up. It breaks a man's heart to be missing the fun, but it's duty first."

"I presume they can't spare you, which is my good fortune," more cheerfully observed Louise. "It is selfish of me, but I am glad to have one friend left at home."

"Then my cloud has a silver lining," exclaimed Kirby, whose boldness was returning. "And you think no less of a man because he is not playing hide-and-seek with submarines off the Irish coast?"

"Why should I?" cried Louise, frank admiration in her eyes. "More honor to the man who serves without hope of glory."

"I'd rather hear you say that than to fly an admiral's pennant," he fervently replied, and his avowal was as plain as words.

She became silent, while she gazed with a sort of musing tenderness at the towering flagship of the fleet, as though her heart had found its home. The breeze died with the sun and the yacht drifted like a phantom on the breast of the flooding tide. Outward bound, swiftly stealing through the hazy twilight, came the long, lean shape of a destroyer. Her decks were stripped and the guns were cleared. The knife-like prow flung the water cleanly aside as the drumming pulsation of the engines drove her with the power of sixteen thousand horses. The men of the deck watch moved about in dungarees and oilskins. From the bridge a fresh-faced youngster waved his cap and Louise McCrea flourished her handkerchief as she cried:

"Good-bye and fare you well."

"There is my rosy little ensign," she explained to Owen Kirby, "and he is the proudest, luckiest man in the world."

At precisely ordered intervals the other destroyers of the division fled past, and their blinkers winked the parting signals to the flagship which flashed back the admiral's good wishes. Queenstown was their destination. Louise McCrea stood looking after them until the low hulls moved as shadows that

blended into the darkening sky. Her eyes were suffused with feeling and there was a catch in her voice as she said to the turret captain:

"Oh, I am *so* sorry for you! Was n't it wonderful to see them! But they have left you behind."

"Would you be sorry to see me go?" he asked her.

"Yes, of course, Owen — but I was not thinking of myself. It would mean such a tremendous lot to you to be in one of those destroyers."

Her sympathy stirred him profoundly, although he had won it by false pretenses. He felt certain that she cared for him. In his heart he was thankful that he was not in one of those uneasy, twisting destroyers, facing exile and discomfort. The sight of them had made his pulse beat no faster. Things were going extraordinarily well with him. At this rate he would dare to ask Louise to marry him before the summer was much older.

When he returned to his ship that night his spirits were blithe and he hummed a song as he went to his room. His mood might have been different could he have overheard a conversation between the gunnery officer and the executive after dinner.

"Another armed guard draft to go to the New York yard," wearily exclaimed the latter. "And our complement is thirty men. How the devil do they suppose we can keep a ship up, with the organization shot to pieces every few days?"

"Those merchant steamers are yelling their heads off for gun crews and the fleet has to suffer," growled the gunnery officer, who was also overworked and

unhappy. "We have to give up two chief petty officers with this draft. That's the worst of it. Well, I know one that can be spared. And it's good rid-dance."

"A gunner? I did n't have the nerve to suggest it, I was afraid you might bite me."

"Not at all. They can take Owen Kirby, captain of number one turret."

"Kirby? Why, that is the prize turret of the ship!" cried the executive. "I thought Kirby was the apple of your eye."

"He was, but not now," replied the gunnery officer.

"What's wrong with him? There's not a mark against his record."

"Well, it's not easy to put your finger on it, but his men have been slowing up a bit, a few seconds on a loading drill, and the trouble is with the turret captain. He always was chesty, but I did n't mind that. You know what the spirit of the ship is — all hands crazy to get into the war. By Jove, they'd swim across if you said the word. Kirby does his duty, but he is n't putting his back into it. I can feel it. A hunch of mine, perhaps, but I'd rather let him go and break in one of the gunner's mates, a lad all pep and punch with a record to make."

"Very well. It's up to you," agreed the executive. "Send him along with the armed guard draft to-morrow morning. A change of air may do him good."

Fresh, fit, and jaunty, the turret captain was smoking a cigarette after breakfast when a messenger

summoned him aft. Smartly at attention he confronted the gunnery officer, who spoke with crisp brevity.

“Good morning, Kirby. You will be ready to leave the ship at nine o’clock to proceed by rail to New York. Report to the officer commanding the armed guard barracks at the navy-yard.”

“Yes, sir. I am to take charge of the draft, deliver the men, and then return to the ship,” was the brisk reply.

“Not at all, Kirby. Don’t shoot until you are on the mark. Report for armed guard duty. Do I make myself clear?”

The chief gunner’s mate stood motionless, a picture of blank amazement. Suppressing the anger which made the color surge to his tanned cheek, he stammered assent while the officer regarded him with a quizzical smile. The “hunch” was correct. Kirby’s emotion betrayed him. He had believed himself indispensable and he had no yearning for hard service overseas. There was a soft spot in the man.

“It — it is short notice, sir,” faltered Kirby. “My papers will have to be —”

“They will be forwarded to you from the chief yeoman’s office,” was the careless reply. “Short notice? We are at war. Have n’t you got that through your head yet?”

The officer turned on his heel and left the deposed turret captain standing stiffly in his tracks. Presently he awoke with a start, muttered an oath or

two, and slowly walked forward. Somehow the word had passed along the gun deck that he had been ordered to command a navy guard aboard a merchant vessel. His friends crowded about to shake hands and pound him on the back. Lucky dog! He was going up against the real stuff, sink or swim, a fight or a frolic. It was a crime to snatch him out of number one turret, but it meant good-night for Fritz if he bobbed up within range. The noisy congratulations carried to the ears of the executive officer who was making a morning tour of inspection. He was immensely pleased, but he also observed that Kirby's demeanor was sullen and unresponsive.

A little later a hundred light-hearted young blue-jackets trooped into a train with bags and hammock rolls and sang themselves hoarse as they journeyed northward. It was a harmless riot. They had no idea of what lay before them, but they were on their way. To them had been vouchsafed the great adventure. There was little sleep that night, but they tumbled out next morning, still bright-eyed and vigorous, to march through the gateway of the navy-yard in Brooklyn and turn toward the rows of wooden barracks which had been hastily erected for the armed guard. The day's work was already in progress. Hundreds of other youngsters in white working clothes were grouped in classes at the spotting-board, the four-inch rifles, the fire control, and signaling devices.

Owen Kirby, having safely delivered his mettlesome charges, was directed to a small office in which confusion seemed to reign. This was a mistaken

impression, however, for the black-haired, wiry lieutenant at the desk was capable of handling several visitors at once. One shipping agent was volubly complaining that he was losing hundreds of dollars a day while his tanker lay at the wharf waiting for guns. Another protested at the expense of ripping out bulkheads to make living quarters for a navy crew. Petty officers and yeomen, ordnance officers and naval constructors, came and went. The Bureau of Navigation demanded to know by long distance 'phone how many details could be assigned to ships at once.

"Kirby? Chief gunner's mate?" snapped the lieutenant. "Just in time. The *Bonanza* had her final inspection this morning. She can sail to-day. A filthy little hooker, but you will have to make the best of it. Here is a list of your men. Have them ready to go aboard right after dinner, understand? Ask the warrant officer in the next room for any more information. Remember, now — good men in poor ships are better than poor men in good ships. Be tactful with the merchant skipper. He's the boss. But if it comes to a scrap with a U-boat, I expect you to take charge."

"I will do my best, sir," smartly answered the chief gunner's mate, but the tones lacked the driving power of indomitable conviction, and the lieutenant glanced up sharply, although he had nothing more to say. There was no waste motion in this intensely active organization, and almost before he could realize what had happened to him, Owen Kirby

was crossing the harbor in a patrol boat with twelve men and their sea-kits. In festive spirits they scrambled up the side of a rusty, deep-laden cargo steamer, of no great tonnage, which had a slack and slovenly aspect. Piles of ashes, the refuse of the galley, odds and ends of litter had been dumped on deck. A pigsty could have been no more unlovely. To the fastidious Kirby, with whom cleanliness had become a religion, this ship was unspeakable. The skipper had gone ashore, but he found the mate and growled:

"I'm in command of the armed guard. Where are the quarters, and when do you expect to make this floating garbage-can fit and decent to live in?"

The mate was lank and middle-aged, with a sour, harrassed manner. Truculently he retorted:

"Your rooms are for'ard, and it's none of your cussed business how this ship is kept. We can't dump rubbish overside. It's against the law in port. We'll clean up when we get to sea."

"Owners too mean to hire a barge for the job?" suggested the other. "Step lively, boys, and we'll stow our dunnage."

The bluejackets, undismayed by their surroundings, were curiously gazing at the raised gun-platforms which had been built on deck, fore and aft, and the long rifles whose polished breech-blocks winked in the sun. They filed into what had been a store-room, which was now divided by a partition with bunks in tiers against the walls. For twelve men the living space was cramped and dingy, but they made no complaints. The chief gunner's mate discovered

that he was expected to double up with a frowsy Norwegian second mate whose tiny box of a room was incredibly disordered. In the heat of midsummer the ship fairly stank of greasy cooking, of bilgewater, of refuse on deck. The lieutenant at the navy-yard had aptly described the *Bonanza* as a filthy little hooker.

The soul of Owen Kirby was in revolt. To have been flung into this, from the majestic, immaculate flagship of the fleet, was adding insult to injury, but he could not forget that he was in command of the armed guard. Methodically he mustered his men and sent them to their stations at the guns. Then he tested the telephone controls which led to the bridge where he "spotted" imaginary ranges through the transmitter and made certain that the sight-setters understood the messages and promptly executed them. Having investigated the ammunition supply, he was scraping acquaintance with two or three of the ship's crew when one of them exclaimed with a laugh:

"Here comes the old man, green umbrella and all. A hot spell surely does boil the tallow out of him. To look at his carcass you'd think there was plenty to eat on this rotten packet."

Kirby saw a rotund man in rumpled white clothes trudge heavily up the gangway. His face was large and pallid and he mopped the water from it. In his youth he must have been robust, but now he was merely gross and long past the prime of usefulness. As he halted to fan himself with a Panama hat, a

mop of tumbled white hair was disclosed, and his hand trembled with fatigue. His manner was jovial, excessively so, as he rolled out a hearty greeting at sight of the chief gunner's mate.

"Glad to have you aboard, Mr. Kirby. A little different from a battleship, hey? But I guess we won't have to worry, with your lads on watch. Sort of cluttered up, but we'll get things to rights. Mr. Biddecott took care of you all right, did he? He's the first officer."

"As well as he could," resentfully answered Kirby. "This is n't much like the Navy. You said it for me, Captain Jordan. Your first trip through the war zone?"

"Yes. And I was n't a mite anxious to do it," was the garrulous confession. "I retired from the sea some years ago and was runnin' a tidy little store, but you know how it is. American shipmasters are an awful scarce article, and it's the same with vessels. Everything that can float and turn a screw over has been yanked into service. With freights so infernal high, owners can afford to lose a vessel after a couple of offshore voyages. Think we can manage to stand off one o' them submarines if we run afoul of it? They've been dreadful cruel to seamen."

"We expect to fight to save our own skins," said the commander of the armed guard. I "hope your crew has the sand to stand by in a pinch."

"Well, I dunno," rather weakly observed Captain Samuel Jordan, his beaded brow creasing in an anxious frown. "Some of them are the scum and scrap-

in's of the water-front like most merchant crews nowadays. Spanish firemen, square-heads, and dagoes in the fo'castle — I don't have to tell you. Join me on the bridge if you like, Mr. Kirby. It's time to get the ship under way."

Assisted by a tug, the *Bonanza* swung out into the stream and slowly kicked her way through the harbor traffic. Neglected and ignoble as was her aspect, there was a redeeming quality. It was revealed in the starry ensign which whipped above her taffrail, in the audacious lads of the Navy who were still grouped about their guns, even in the humble drudges of her crew who moved from one routine task to another. The *Bonanza*, outward bound across the Western Ocean, was defying the pirates of Imperial Germany. In her dumb way she accepted the lawless challenge and championed the freedom of the seas. During these early months of the war merchant steamers out of American ports were not assembled in convoys. The *Bonanza* fared forth alone to accept the hazards and the odds.

Outside Sandy Hook a boisterous wind had piled up a swollen sea which broke green over the steamer's bows as she lunged into it. Hastily loaded and poorly trimmed, she labored until Kirby wondered what would happen in a gale. Captain Jordan was moved to suggest, with his unctuous chuckle:

"I suppose you'll want to have some target practice when the weather moderates, but I do hope you won't shoot off them guns any more than's necessary. It's my opinion that the concussions 'ud shake the

rivets out of this condemned old vessel and she'd open up like a basket and drop right out from under us."

It was a plausible conjecture, and Kirby promised to make the target-firing as gentle as possible. The situation might have appealed to his sense of humor, but he still nursed his grievances and also felt unhappy symptoms of seasickness. The smells and the motion were novel to him. In this low-spirited mood he was convinced that he had been deliberately sentenced to the *Bonanza*, not through any fault of his own, but because some hidden enmity had conspired against him. In short, he was the victim of a raw deal. He was no happier after trying to eat the food served on board. It was scanty and wretched. Even his youngsters, whom nothing could daunt, had asked him to complain to the captain. This made conditions no better. The corpulent skipper blandly explained that the owners stocked the ship and he could n't be expected to run "table-dote" excursions for pampered gun crews from the Navy, who were fed too high, as everybody knew.

Thereupon the chief gunner's mate, in an ugly temper and glad of an excuse for a quarrel, sent his men into the storeroom with orders to break out cases of canned goods for their own mess. The *Bonanza* was plodding along at eight and nine knots, with an occasional breakdown in the engine-room, and there were indications of a famine before the ship had been at sea a week. The dozen boyish bluejackets lost their exuberance and pulled their belts tighter. They could have told you something about the hor-

rors of war. But the rusty *Bonanza* was wallowing nearer the danger zone day by day, and one could forget he was hungry in the blissful hope of engaging a hostile submarine.

The chief gunner's mate had recovered his sea-legs and suffered chiefly from a gnawing appetite and a plague of rats which scampered across his bunk at night. His relations with the jovial skipper were far from cordial. The old man was losing flesh and his laugh was infrequent. At times he was talkative and confiding, and then came spells of absent-minded silence or gusts of ill-humor. He seemed flabby, inert, in mind and body. It was curious to note that the lank, sun-dried mate whose personality had appeared so insignificant was becoming the dominant figure of the two as the ship approached the perilous waters. Dyspepsia tormented Mr. Biddecott, and he had led a drab career with small hope of advancement, but in his soul burned the spark of manliness, the stubborn courage of a true American seaman.

Kirby appraised him, and they learned to know each other as they stood the watches together. The mate had not sailed with Captain Samuel Jordan before, but he shrewdly took stock of him.

"A good man once, Mr. Kirby," he would say, in his melancholy accents, "but too old for this job. A young man's game. I'm too old, but I'm tougher than some. The skipper has cracked. He stands up here on the bridge with his belly against the rail and bites his nails while the sweat pours off him. His nerves are sick."

"Aye, Mr. Biddecott. He should have been left in his little grocery store, and I doubt if he'll bring the ship out again. In case of trouble I shall look to you. This is between us, of course. Can you keep the crew in hand?"

"By God, I'll hold them down or beat their brains out," quietly responded the mate. "Let me know how many men you need to pass up extra shells from the magazine and they'll be there."

It would be unfair to infer that the chief gunner's mate was a slacker or a coward. He was superbly skilled at his own trade and the compulsion of duty was binding. Although he loathed his billet and his heart was not in it, nevertheless he was vigilant, efficient, and untiring. His gun crews were drilled until they were ready to drop in their tracks, but, for all their buoyant zest, they were conscious of a lack, a missing factor of the equation. What they failed to find in Kirby was the inspiration of leadership, that flaming resolution which kindles other men so that they would sooner die and win than live and lose. They knew the several parts they had to play, he had made them letter-perfect, but it was more like training for target practice than making ready to fight a desperate battle for survival.

The *Bonanza* passed in safety until she was within four hundred miles of the coast of France. Her wireless was intercepting distress calls from other ships that were shelled or torpedoed all around her. Wreckage drifted by, and empty boats, and the bodies of drowned seamen whose life-belts buoyed them

grotesquely. Captain Samuel Jordan stared at these omens of disaster and had a mattress fetched on deck. He disliked the notion of being blown up in his bunk. Eating had ceased to interest him. He remained continually on the bridge and subsisted on bottled beer and ship's-biscuit. His crew, reading his manifest uneasiness, saw phantom periscopes and were ripe for panic. One fireman refused to go below with his watch, and it was Mr. Biddecott who knocked him down and threw him into the hatchway.

The submarine attack occurred soon after sunrise. A shell sang overhead and a white cascade spouted on the tranquil sea. Another followed and the main-topmast fell on deck, carrying away the radio wires. It was a singularly lucky shot. The *Bonanza* could send out no S.O.S. calls to summon cruiser or destroyer to the rescue. It was her fate to fight it out alone. The alarm gong called all hands to quarters. Set like sprinters on the mark, the gun crews waited for the word from the bridge where Kirby stood with the binoculars at his eyes, the telephone head-piece clamped on like a helmet.

The circumstances were uncanny because although the steamer was under shell-fire no submarine was visible. The sea rolled empty and unbroken to the horizon's rim. A third shell wailed in its swift passage and the foam spouted a little way ahead of the ship which swung from her course on the next turn of the zigzag. Owen Kirby was gazing into the dazzling path of the sun and his keen vision at length dis-

cerned a black speck which swam like a mote in this molten radiance. The U-boat commander had artfully chosen his position. The light favored him while it sorely handicapped the navy gunners who were compelled to shoot into the sun.

The enemy was at least eight thousand yards distant — four sea miles — and Kirby called out the range. Forward and aft his gunners trained their rifles for elevation and deflection and the old *Bonanza* was jarred to her keel as the first shots were fired, a few seconds apart. Mr. Biddecott ran aft and hoisted the Stars and Stripes, and the bluejackets cheered as the ragged, grimy bit of bunting fluttered defiance. It was load and fire at will, as rapidly as the guns could be served, and the shell-handlers were passing the polished projectiles like an expert basket-ball team.

Kirby swore to relieve his feelings as he saw that the bright sun was blinding his men at the eyepieces of the sights. It was to be a waiting game, hammer and tongs, until the sun climbed higher or the U-boat crept nearer. The German gunners, crowded upon the narrow deck of their unstable craft were shooting wild and the steamer was still unscathed at the end of an hour of furious action. Then it was apparent that the commander had determined to finish the business, for his craft moved in, a thousand yards closer, and shelled with more deliberation.

The gunners of the *Bonanza* were firing accurately, but the target was very small, and it was immensely

difficult to hit at three and a half miles. Once the enemy moved farther out as if made more cautious, but he soon returned and resumed the methodical bombardment. The first hit scored against the *Bonanza* was a shrapnel shell which ripped a corner off a steel deck-house and showered fragments far and wide. One piece removed the Panama hat of Captain Samuel Jordan who held his head between his hands and bellowed the news that he had been killed dead on the spot. Another tore a gash in the thigh of an earnest youth at the forward gun. With a flow of profanity shocking in a child of his tender years, he bound the hurt with a strip from his undershirt and declared that no triple-blanked German son of a skunk could make him quit for a little thing like that.

Two hours passed and the doomed *Bonanza* was keeping up the fight. Kirby shifted his men about because their eyes were swollen and bloodshot and the incessant shock had deafened them. He ran from his station to shout encouragement, to pat them on the back, to tell them that he would never give up the ship. The selfishness and vanity which had obscured his manhood were burned away as by fire. His clouded vision was clearing and he beheld the one thing worth while, the truth unchanging and eternal. His square jaw was set and his eyes shone like stars. No longer sullen, he smiled when he spoke. He was profoundly contented.

The cruel submarine could not be driven off. The spray flew high from shells that seemed to burst on

its deck, but they failed to cripple it. The German gunners, patiently correcting their range, found the target and began to riddle the steamer which drifted at laggard speed as if weary of the fight. A shell pierced the plates of her side and exploded in the engine-room. Helpless, she rolled like a log in the trough of the sea. Oilers, stokers, coal-passers surged on deck and rushed to lower the boats. The mate drove them back with his pistol and Kirby plunged into the ruck, striking out right and left.

A few minutes later the ship reeled as though she had rammed a rock and black smoke billowed from a forward hatch. With buckets and hose the bluejackets fought the fire before it crept far into the cargo and then returned to serve their guns with the same headlong, desperate ardor. The after gun was presently disabled by a shell which struck the platform. Several of this crew were wounded, but the others shifted forward to help their weary comrades. It was more like a slaughter when a shell glanced from a bridge stanchion and blew the man at the wheel to bloody rags. The white clothes of Captain Samuel Jordan were spattered with crimson. He clung to the twisted railing and stared wildly at his shattered vessel, which was slowly sinking by the head. His lips twitched and his voice was unsteady as he cried imploringly to Kirby:

“What’s the sense of it? It’s time we abandoned ship, I tell you! I’m going to order the boats away. This is murder. You’ve done your duty, man. Have

you gone crazy? Hi, there, Mr. Biddecott, run aft and haul down that flag!"

Kirby smiled as he replied:

"Nothing doing, Captain Jordan. I'll give the word to quit the ship. Stay where you are, Mr. Biddecott, for I'll shoot the man that tries to pull that ensign down."

"You need n't pot me," observed the mate, with unusual animation. "It's for you to say when we're whipped. I hope the Navy is full of men as crazy as you are. Going to blaze away with that for'ard gun till we founder?"

"There's still a chance of assistance," returned Kirby, "and my men have n't used all their ammunition. Do you see any reason for quitting?"

He descended the ladder to find his wounded men who had been carried to a shady corner of the deck. He knelt beside a boy of seventeen years whose chest had been cruelly torn by a piece of shell. One of his pals had bathed and bandaged him, and the ship's cook, a Georgia darky, was holding a glass of water to his bloodless lips. The labored breath, the pulse which had almost flickered out, told Kirby that it was the end of the voyage. The cook gently adjusted a pillow and waved a folded newspaper as a fan while he murmured:

"I'se prayin' fo' you, son, jes' the same as yo' dear mammy would do."

Kirby patted the bluejacket's cheek, which was as smooth and fair as a girl's. The caress was like that of a father. For a moment the boy awoke from

his drowsiness and recognized the commander of the armed guard. With steady gaze, in a voice astonishingly clear, he said:

“Good men in poor ships, sir — better than — better than poor men in — in good ships. Sorry I could n’t finish —”

“This man’s navy is proud of your finish, Joe,” softly replied Kirby as he turned away. The forward gun of the *Bonanza* was still in action, but as he hastened to the bridge one of his men reported:

“We have only five rounds left, sir. And the submarine is closing in.”

“Then it’s time for us to go,” was the reluctant reply. “Well, we stood the murderer off for two hours, but the luck broke wrong. We had to play a lone hand.”

He was about to tell Mr. Biddecott to get the boats away when with a shattering roar the sea and sky turned red in one great, blinding flash, or so it seemed to the stricken Kirby. In the fleeting instant before he lost consciousness he believed that the ship had blown up. He lay sprawled where the blast of the exploding shell had flung him, upon the splintered platform or false deck which supported the forward gun. At length a glimmer of perception returned to him, the sense of intolerable pain, a bewildered struggle to realize what had befallen him. One leg was broken below the knee. It hung over the edge of the platform in an oddly twisted manner and he regarded it curiously. He raised a groping hand to his face and winced. His fingers

were wet and red. His vision was uncertain, but he thought he could see the boats pulling away from the ship. Presently two of his gunners came running forward. They were amazed to find him alive. Their voices came to him as though faint and far away. They wished to pick him up and try to lower him into a boat.

He was not at all interested in their desire to save him. His dazed mind held one conception only—it could respond to nothing else than the purpose which inspired him. His men were about to lift him in their arms, although one of them said to the other:

“He’ll die before we get him over the side. That shell smashed him to bits. Easy now!”

“Easy she goes,” was the reply. “A damn shame, too! This Owen Kirby was surely a man. It would ha’ broke his heart to give up the ship. I’m glad he did n’t have to.”

The chief gunner’s mate tried to speak to them. His tongue seemed swollen, his teeth locked, and the words he so desperately strove to utter were no more than a groan. He was determined to make them understand, and after another effort they heard him mutter:

“Leave me, boys. That goes. It’s an order.”

The two bluejackets stared at him, then at each other. They were hesitant, perplexed, but the bonds of discipline and the habit of obedience were strong. Kirby was the commander of the armed guard. He was as good as dead, and he desired to go down with

this ship. This was how it appealed to them. His word was law and his decisions supreme. They perceived, also, that his was the right to make this splendid choice. He repeated the order, a faltering word or two and they solemnly nodded assent. Gripping his hand in farewell, they went to the side of the ship and slid down the falls of a davit into the waiting boat.

Owen Kirby lay sprawled as he had fallen. He could look across the gun-platform and catch glimpses of the summer sea as the shell-rent *Bonanza* rolled with a slow, sodden motion. His men had said he was dying, but they might be wrong. He would wait and see. All he asked was a little strength, and a respite until the game was played to the end. His mind was less befogged. Motionless, he watched the three boats draw away from the ship and then halt to wait for her tragic obliteration. From his elevated resting-place he could glance aft. It gratified him to behold the ragged, starry ensign still flaming in the breeze. The symbol conveyed its message to him with a new and intimate significance.

The German submarine had turned to sweep in a wide circle around the ship. The approach was wary, suspicious, as though the commander wished to assure himself that all hands had abandoned the *Bonanza*. Apparently convinced that only dead men were left on board, he steered within hailing distance of the boats in order to interrogate the captain.

Owen Kirby saw the submarine drift a little closer, with engines stopped. The long, wet back of

her was exposed and two officers climbed out of the open hatch of the conning tower. The eye of the chief gunner's mate measured the distance as accurately as a range finder could have done it. His lips moved in devout supplication to God. Failure meant that the U-boat would slay him with the ship, and failure was almost certain, but this had been his resolve, to gamble on the one chance in a million.

He did not know whether he could drag himself across the ten feet of planking intervening between him and the forward gun. As soon as he should move at all, the submarine would observe it and rake the bow of the ship with shrapnel. Even if he reached the gun and it proved to be unloaded, he could never open the breech and insert a shell, but there was a possibility that the explosion which injured him had also blown the men from their stations. He grasped the problem with a sort of lucid intuition because the incessant training of years had become second nature. He was no longer Owen Kirby with a life of his own to live and private aspirations to be attained, but a chief gunner's mate of the American Navy who read his duty clear and inexorable.

He looked again at the submarine and then mustered every last atom of will power and vitality for the task in hand. His body rolled over and he raised himself upon his knees. Lurching forward, he lay prone, but his powerful arms upheaved him again and so he crept very slowly, dragging a broken leg and leaving a crimson smear across the platform. Ten feet to go, and the submarine, caught unpre-

pared, would require at least three minutes to submerge. He dared not turn his head for a glimpse of that hateful target. His eyes were pitifully intent upon his goal.

The U-boat was already aware of his purpose. The German officers had discerned this half-naked, bloody apparition of a man awake from the dead. Commands were shouted, confused and guttural, and precious moments wasted while the German gunners scrambled up from below and excitedly opened fire. They hit the ship, but left the creeping man and the forward gun unscathed. The blond commander, so cool and heroic when engaged in destroying merchant vessels or speeding torpedoes at hospital ships, was in a state of consternation. He bawled at his men to get inside the boat and kicked them as they jostled madly toward the open hatch. They impeded each other and he pounded them with the butt of his pistol. He thrust them aside, leaving two or three on deck, and fairly tumbled down the ladder in his frantic haste to screw down the hatch and submerge. The poor devils outside could drown for all he cared.

The chief gunner's mate of the *Bonanza* had gained that ten feet of his agonized pilgrimage. He wiped the blood from his eyes and grasped the training gear by which he hauled himself erect, slowly, hand over fist. Supporting himself upon one leg, leaning against the breech of the gun, he waited a moment until his swimming vision became focused on the submarine. From the drifting boats filled with the

castaways of the ship there came the noise of cheering. The tears rolled down Kirby's disfigured cheek, but they were not tears of sadness. He was very happy.

Automatically, with deft, unerring skill, he spun the brass wheel which deflected the long rifle to right or left. The heavy mechanism moved so easily that a child could have controlled it. The touch of another wheel and the muzzle dropped until it was aiming at point-blank range, a scant four hundred yards. This manipulation required no more than a few seconds. Kirby hobbled to one side and glanced through a telescope sight. He swayed and faltered, but there was strength in him for a glimpse through the other sight. The cross-hairs bore true on the mark. The ship rolled a little and he delayed. Then as he felt, rather than saw, that the submarine was where he wished it to be, he pressed the firing-pin.

Instead of the futile silence which he had feared, the gun spoke with its sharp and vicious detonation and Kirby reeled back, collapsing on deck. He had not fainted. Even death would have to wait until he saw where that last shot struck. Black smoke and white water leaping high veiled the submarine from his sight. Then this tumult subsided and a rounded prow lifted grotesquely from the boiling sea. It seemed almost to stand on end. Great bubbles of air broke the surface. The bodies of men shot up as though propelled by some violent pressure and vanished as suddenly as they had appeared. Floating *débris* moved rapidly in the whirlpools.



IT SEEMED ALMOST TO STAND ON END

The *Bonanza's* boats perceived that there were no survivors. As by a common impulse the oars splashed in a return journey to the ship. First to gain the deck were the jubilant bluejackets. Their pride in the chief gunner's mate overcame the keen regret that they had not been with him, but as one of them said while they raced forward:

"He had to turn the trick alone. It was the only way to out-guess old Fritz. And he had it all framed up, boy, when he told us to beat it. Do you suppose he's dead?"

"Kirby?" shouted a derisive comrade. "There's no such thing as killing that bird."

When they found him, however, it seemed as though he had, in truth, fired his last shot. Limp, broken, insensible, he was sprawled again with his head on his arm. They were caring for him as best they could when Captain Samuel Jordan came lumbering up to blubber, in accents of grief:

"I just can't help cryin' if he's passed out. He was n't always polite, and he did treat me rough, but, my stars, did you see what he did to that wicked U-boat? We'll shift him to the yawl as careful as we can, even if there ain't a kick or a flutter left in him."

There spoke up a brisk petty officer, boatswain's mate, second class, who had succeeded to the command of the armed guard.

"We stay by the ship this time, you big stiff, until we find out whether she'll float or founder. And Mr. Biddecott is the skipper by unanimous vote of the American Navy."

They carried Owen Kirby into the captain's cabin which had not been demolished. Presently a seaman who had been sent to the crow's-nest as a lookout yelled that he sighted smoke off the port bow. It trailed as a black banner, and soon beneath it there lifted four funnels and a long, lean hull — a destroyer cruising on the offshore patrol.

"Glory be! It's a Yank!" roared the boatswain's mate as he danced on the bridge. "And if the bulkheads hold in this old hooker we may work her into port."

With the slashing stride of a hound, the destroyer came over the blue sea and slowed down to forge past the stern of the derelict. The crew had been sent to quarters and the depth bombs hung over the fan-tail, ready for release, but the officers whose heads appeared above the splinter mats which protected the bridge were gazing at the spreading blobs of oil and the bits of wreckage.

"Looks like you beat us to it," the commander sang out through a megaphone. "Bully for you! Any casualties?"

"Yes. Please send the doctor aboard, and some hands to help us patch up the ship," answered Mr. Biddecott.

Thirty men swarmed up the side, sailors, machinists, and what-not. They consulted the chief engineer of the *Bonanza* and briefly interviewed the mate. Then they scattered in squads and the crippled steamer resounded with a cheerful, orderly activity. Six hours later she was moving toward the coast of

France at a fitful gait of four knots an hour, very much down by the head, steering in a drunken fashion, and apparently on the point of plunging to Davy Jones, but under way nevertheless. The destroyer stood by until a tug and two armed yachts had responded to the radio summons, and then she fled for Queenstown with the wounded aboard.

When Owen Kirby came to himself again he was in an airy ward of a hospital on the hillside which overlooked the harbor and the Irish Sea beyond. His head was swathed in bandages and his leg was in splints, and he dully wondered how much was left of him. He was too weak to care, but one day slid into another and his rugged, youthful vitality was winning the victory. At length he was able to talk without exhaustion and the doctor answered some of his questions.

"The *Bonanza*? Oh, she is in dock, the same as you are. Another month may fit her for sea. Perhaps she will be ordered to Queenstown to join a convoy homeward bound."

"I'd like to see her again, Doc. What have they done with my men?"

"They are still on this side — aboard destroyers for temporary duty. The wounded are all fit as fiddles."

"Tell me, is my face scarred up much?"

"Well, it is healing nicely, but I am afraid your beauty is rather spoiled. Your features are all there. That is some consolation."

"Um-m, I used to like to throw a front, but what's

the odds? I'm a lot more anxious about that leg of mine. Will I be fit for active service again?"

"It will be strong, Kirby, but you may have to limp. However, they won't throw you out of the Navy for that."

Another week of healthy convalescence and there came to the ward a British admiral commanding the Irish coasts and waters. The gold sleeve stripes ran clear to his elbow. Handsome, decisive, austere, there was something warmly human in his manner as the chief gunner's mate attempted to sit up and salute.

"Carry on, Kirby. Don't mind me," smiled the great man. "I hope they have looked after you. I want to offer my respect and congratulations. You are an honor to the Allied Service. It was my pleasure to recommend you, in a report to the Admiralty, for the Distinguished Service Order."

"Thank you, sir," replied the amazed invalid, "but I don't see what you did it for."

"You might ask your Vice-Admiral Sims. He approves."

"Well, if 'Bill' Sims says so, I can't object," said the commander of the armed guard.

He was quite well and able to walk up and down the hill when a small, uncouth cargo steamer entered the harbor, wearing a decent garb of fresh gray paint. It was like meeting an old friend to recognize the *Bonanza*, and he hovered about the landing-pier until Mr. Biddecott came ashore for orders. They drifted over to the bar of the Queen's Hotel and drank a health to the voyage westward bound.

"The American chief-of-staff wants to send me home in a liner, as a gilt-edged passenger," said Kirby. "Nothing doing. I go in the *Bonanza*, with the armed guard, and my old boys will be there."

"I'll be proud to have you back," replied the acting skipper, in his mournful voice. "Captain Samuel Jordan preferred a liner. He sailed three weeks ago."

And so the brave *Bonanza* dared the war zone again, but destiny was kinder and she went clear to pursue her way through the untroubled spaces of the Atlantic. Owen Kirby found leisure for reflection while the salt winds were restoring his old vigor. He did not flinch when in the little mirror of his cabin he beheld the red scars that slanted from chin to brow and the twist at the corner of his mouth. He could not expect a girl to be fond of him, although the dear image of Louise McCrea haunted his dreams. But his love for her had been mingled with a base alloy of self-interest. He was a different man now, but he deserved the punishment of losing her.

When the steamer reached New York, orders were awaiting him to proceed to Washington and report at the Bureau of Navigation. On a bright autumn morning he passed along Pennsylvania Avenue and lingered in front of the White House. To him the stately residence was the headquarters of his commander-in-chief. Over it floated and rippled a starry flag, fresh, resplendent. The chief gunner's mate smiled, for he was thinking of a ragged, smoke-begrimed wisp of an ensign which had whipped from

the stern of a rusty, shell-torn little cargo boat four hundred miles from the coast of France. He stood at attention and bared his head, and then walked on to the Army and Navy Building.

It seemed that the Secretary of the Navy had expressed the wish to shake hands and chat with him. Pleased, but unperturbed, the chief gunner's mate was escorted into an office of vast dimensions in which several admirals appeared to be waiting their turns. A kindly man stepped forward, beckoned this humble visitor, and said:

"Come sit down in the corner with me, Kirby. I know all about you. What can I do for you?"

The welcome was as simple, as unassuming, as if they were two enlisted men talking together. Kirby's emotions were stirred. He scarcely knew what to say. In his estimation the honor was greater than to have been recommended for the Distinguished Service Order of England. While he hesitated the Secretary suggested:

"You have had enough sea duty. I was thinking of promotion to warrant rank and a shore billet at the Norfolk Navy Yard."

Respectfully but firmly Owen Kirby answered:

"I am not looking for anything soft, if you please, sir. All I want is to go out again with the armed guard of the *Bonanza*."

"And pot another sub?" laughed the Secretary. "Well, I don't see how I can object to such a request as that. Go to it, and God bless you, Kirby, my boy."

The chief gunner's mate wandered out of the hall-

way and drifted irresolute. He thought of looking up old friends in the building, but his mood was no longer elated. He felt lonely, and tired. Suddenly he gazed down the corridor with a glad, incredulous expression. His shoulders straightened and his chin went up. Louise McCrea was hastening toward him. Then he remembered his disfigurement, his lameness, and all his past unworthiness. He would have evaded her, but she had already desecrated him and her face was alight with joyousness.

"Oh, I knew I'd find you, Owen!" was her breathless greeting. "I went to the armed guard division just now and they told me you were in the Secretary's office."

"You were trying to find *me*!" he exclaimed in wonderment.

"Why, of course. Dad got a report on your ship for me, and then I 'phoned the New York Yard and just flew for Washington."

"Why — why was that, Louise?" he stammered foolishly.

"Because I was afraid you were not coming to see me," she confessed, with a shade of embarrassment. "I heard that you — that you had been badly hurt. I met an officer who saw you in Queenstown, and — and — you used to be quite vain, Owen, dear."

He was holding fast to her hand as they walked to the entrance and out into the sunlight. Through a rift of the trees the flag above the White House caught their eyes. It seemed to explain many things that could be left unspoken.

"You knew I loved you before I went across," said Owen as they strolled toward a leafy park. "But I was pretty poor stuff, a man with a rotten spot in him."

"Perhaps I saw that, too," she candidly admitted. "Do you remember that afternoon when we watched the destroyer division steam out to sea? You did n't want to go, for all your fine speeches. I sensed it, and it hurt me terribly."

"And you cared, even then?" exclaimed the chief gunner's mate. His scarred features were aglow with courage unquenchable, with the love that passeth all understanding, so that in the sight of the girl at his side he was everything she desired.

"I cared, Owen, and therefore I hoped," answered Louise.

His reply was wholly irrelevant, but she nodded as though it were perfectly satisfactory.

"If you are willing to marry me before the *Bonanza* sails, I should like to ask Mr. Biddecott to come to the wedding as best man. There is n't much style about him, but —"

"But he also stood the test, Owen, dear. I understand," smiled Louise.

THE SILENT SERVICE

COMMANDER WALTER LOWRY had been tied to a desk in the Bureau of Operations during the first half-year of the war. His duties were exacting, and he performed them so well that his repeated requests for active service overseas were firmly denied. One jubilant friend after another had dropped in to say good-bye before joining the destroyer fleet, and Lowry envied them as the luckiest men alive.

He was the type of naval officer whom you would have expected to find afloat — a robust physique, decisive manner, and a will quietly masterful. The pity of it was, as he wistfully pondered the situation, that he knew the destroyer game better than most of them. He had been senior officer of a division during those arduous weeks of secret drill in southern waters while the war clouds were gathering, but the flotillas had sailed for Queenstown without him.

His character was too finely tempered, too well disciplined, to sulk under restraint, but he began to wonder if there might be a flaw in his record afloat. The Navy seldom forgives and never forgets a mistake. Lowry was unable to dismiss this unhappy surmise, failing to realize that he had become unduly sensitive, perhaps a little morbid, with the strain of unremitting work and responsibility.

His chief was a four-starred admiral, which rank is the exalted limit, as you may know, but he was

also a human being. This was why he said, in his brusque way, to the lesser admiral who directed the Bureau of Navigation:

"I should be very sorry to lose Commander Lowry, but he seems to be going a bit stale. Nothing serious — I have no complaints to make — I think you had better find another berth for him."

"Very well, sir. I will send him to sea. I recommended him very highly, you may remember, so I hope he has not fallen down —"

"Not at all. Please don't misunderstand me," was the emphatic reply. "I have become fond of Lowry personally which may be why I notice — er — the little things. He mopes without being aware of it, and is losing his keen edge. He takes the war hard and worries too much. A change of air is the medicine, eh?"

"Then I will give him a destroyer, sir. The *Burnham* is due at Liverpool for an overhaul and her skipper is coming home on sick-leave."

The four-starred admiral nodded graciously and strode into the corridor, and for all his sixty years and his white hair he wished in his heart that he might be clinging to the bridge of a bucking destroyer in the submarine zone. To Commander Walter Lowry the sudden sailing orders were like a summons to a holiday. He was coming into his own, returning to the boisterous sea and a ship to do his bidding, and instantly forgotten was the fear that he had been thought unfit for such a task. At twenty-four hours' notice he took passage in an American liner bound

out of New York, and would have smiled at a landsman's suggestion that crossing the Atlantic in wartime was an unpleasant adventure.

Instead of tediously plodding with a convoy of cargo boats, this liner ran alone and trusted to her heels to dodge the ambushed enemy. A hundred bluejackets manned the battery of five-inch rifles, and nothing disgusted them more than a peaceful voyage. The steamer carried a mere handful of passengers whose errands were urgent or official. Vanished were the hordes of tourists who had formerly filled her cabins. Commander Lowry was glad to find several other naval officers aboard, and they flocked together after the clannish manner of their kind while the khaki of the Army was grouped at other tables in the dining-saloon.

The few civilians were less sociably inclined. They seemed to regard each other with a certain polite but suspicious scrutiny, and conversation was noticeably guarded. Rumor was busy, as usual — that the fat man who dozed in the smoking-room over a bottle of beer was really an agent of the British secret service; that the purser had searched the luggage of the affable Belgian gentleman; that a bomb had been discovered in a coal bunker; that five U-boats had been ordered to hunt down and destroy this audacious Yankee liner which had so often defied them. Meanwhile the chief engineer, upon whose broad shoulders rested the burden of salvation, played pinochle with the captain of a torpedoed transport and refused to borrow trouble.

Day after day the lonely steamer hastened eastward over a sea from which shipping had almost disappeared. At length it was perceived that she was being driven to the utmost, to the last knot of speed, and the passengers walked the deck grotesquely girdled with life-preservers while the Navy gun crews stood instantly ready for action. Commander Lowry and the other officers were assigned to special duty by the master of the steamer and stood their watches on the bridge as extra lookouts. Their training made them useful for such an emergency in which keen vision and the utmost vigilance were vital factors of safety.

To Lowry there was nothing irksome in this volunteer service. Idleness bored him, and he was glad to assume a little share of the responsibility which the ship's company had faced through voyage after voyage with a matter-of-fact courage that was supremely admirable. During the first night in the danger zone, while the darkened steamer dodged on her zigzag courses and the decks trembled to the fevered beat of the engines, Lowry went on duty at four o'clock in the morning. The weather was clear and the breeze had died. The tranquil sea was unvexed by breaking waves. It slumbered beneath the stars which dimmed as the gleam of dawn changed the dusky surface to a burnished gray. The eastern horizon was almost cloudless, and the master of the liner was gazing at it as he said to Lowry:

"It will be a bright sunrise. I never saw a finer morning. Ideal conditions for submarine attack."

"Could n't be better, sir. It's a favorite trick of theirs to get between a vessel and the rising sun."

"I know," said the skipper. "One of the pirates shelled me last voyage — carried away my radio wires and spattered the deck with shrapnel; but the sea was too rough for him to do much fancy shooting and his torpedo missed our stern by a dozen feet."

Soon the morning glowed serene and brilliant. The liner was destined to pass unharmed through this critical hour of the voyage. Her time had not come. Peril was still hidden and imminent, however, and the tense readiness was unrelaxed. The clock in the wheel-house tinkled eight bells, and Commander Walter Lowry clambered down the stairway with a wire-edged appetite for breakfast. Wearing a fleeced-lined jacket under the life-belt, trousers tucked into the destroyer-man's long leather boots, a knitted cap pulled over his ears, he looked like a rough-and-ready sailor as he passed along the promenade deck to his room. Glancing aft, he hesitated, his tired eyes brightened, and then he advanced to meet the woman who had greeted him with a cheery wave of the hand.

Lowry was still youthful, but fancy free, and his profession had been his mistress. A hard-headed streak had made him impatient with the sentimental ensigns and lieutenants who were forever falling in love and out again and making infernal asses of themselves. As for marriage, it was a poor proposition for a naval officer condemned to exile from home and pinched for income. Still true to this practical

doctrine, Lowry nevertheless was conscious of a slight flutter in the region of his heart at sight of this passenger who had honored him with her acquaintance. She was English, Lady Violet Chamberlayne by name, and gossip had it that the due process of law had released her from an exceedingly useless husband. Her mission to the United States had concerned some Allied war charity, and because she was traveling alone her fellow voyagers displayed a friendly interest, but she maintained a courteous reserve. Commander Walter Lowry was the exception.

As she stood at the steamer's rail, he admired her with the discernment of a man of excellent, even critical, taste. Her fair coloring had no need to seek the aid of the beauty parlor and the charm of girlhood lingered in her eyes and on her lips. Lowry had often expressed a rude contempt for beautiful dolls, but this slender Englishwoman with the thoroughbred air appealed to him as being singularly intelligent and efficient. He smiled his frank approval as he said:

"You must have turned out early, too, Lady Chamberlayne, but it was not a case of nerves, I'm sure."

"Oh, no! I like a stroll before breakfast, and this air is superb. The old gentleman from New Zealand just now confessed to me that he spent the night in a deck chair. You know who I mean. He wears one of those inflated rubber suits equipped with a lunch hamper and a brandy flask and an electric light. Such an extraordinary person!"

"He can cruise under his own power if Fritz slips a tin fish into us," laughed Lowry. "He will feel easier when a few American destroyers pick us up. They ought to find us some time this forenoon."

"How splendid! And they will take us safely into port? But how will your ships know where we are?"

"A secret rendezvous," answered the commander, with a perceptible shade of reserve. He was instinctively cautious concerning the silent operations of his Service.

"How stupid of me! It is arranged beforehand, of course!" exclaimed Lady Violet Chamberlayne. "I have seen almost nothing of your American Navy. Its officers are delightful men, although I have met only one or two."

"Thank you. I am jealous of the other one," said Lowry, with a bow.

"Well done! An Englishman would have missed the chance to pay a compliment. And you are to command one of these dashing destroyers? Has your Admiralty sent many of them across?"

"A few. Possibly more or less," was the enigmatical reply, and Lowry's voice was almost curt.

Sensitive to the implied rebuke, Lady Violet flushed as she protested:

"That is quite horrid of you, Commander Lowry. I resent your manner."

Penitently he begged her pardon, explaining that he was forbidden to discuss such matters as this. Just then he happened to glance over her shoulder at the sea. Motionless he stared with eyes so intent,

so wholly oblivious of his companion, that she turned her head to discover what had startled him. He was deaf to her query. The wake of the steamer was a white pathway of foam which merged again, after a few hundred yards, into the untroubled blue of the ocean while much farther astern one small wave broke and flashed in the sunlight. Lowry touched Lady Violet's arm and indicated this wave which showed like a bit of snow on an azure carpet.

"I see it," said she, "but why are you so frightfully interested? Our ship made it, I presume, or a little breeze is springing up."

"That gleam of broken water is four thousand yards behind us — two miles," he spoke up sharply. "And it does n't vanish nor does it stay in the same place. And the swell is not even ruffled anywhere else about it. The wave is chasing us, and this ship never made it."

"A submarine?" cried Lady Violet, more excited than alarmed.

"Precisely that. What you see is the bow wave of a submarine running awash at full speed."

"But is our captain asleep? And what are your Navy gunners doing? Why don't they open fire and sink it?"

"Because that U-boat came up and sighted us just a few minutes too late. We had passed her line of range. She won't shoot at us because we are too small a target end on, and we are ever so much faster. This liner is armed for defensive warfare, carrying mail and passengers. It's the skipper's business to

get them safely through the danger zone. And that U-boat yonder is perfectly harmless, so far as we are concerned. Our bluejackets would stand one chance in a hundred of putting a shell into her at that distance and she would submerge at the flash of a gun. Fritz, boy, you are out of luck this time."

Silently they watched the white wave increase its distance from the steamer until it was lost to view. There were no other passengers on deck. The ship's officers would tell them nothing about the episode. Such stories were not apt to soothe the nerves of timid persons. It had been touch and go, disaster shaved by the narrowest margin of luck.

"If you don't mind, we'll keep this to ourselves," said Lowry.

Lady Violet still stood very near him, her sleeve brushing his. Her cheek seemed a trifle pale, but her composure was unshaken. The peril whose realization they shared had given them a sense of companionship, sudden and almost intimate.

"I am fond of secrets, and this is a thriller," she replied. "I suggest we go down to breakfast. My head feels rather queer. Your Yankee destroyers can't hop along too soon to please me."

Two hours after this, several faint smudges of smoke lifted above the sky-line, and surprisingly soon the tiny funnels were visible. They came rushing out of the eastward, eager and tireless — these four American destroyers of the Queenstown fleet on convoy duty bound. The fantastic patterns of dazzle-paint which streaked their hulls produced curious

illusions. It was difficult to say with certainty in what direction they were heading and their outlines were blurred. The low prows ripped the smooth sea apart or nosed into the gentle swell and flung it in sparkling sheets.

Commander Walter Lowry watched them as they approached the liner and then veered and wheeled to hold their stations abreast or scouted a little in advance. One of them sheered close alongside, and an officer bawled from her hooded bridge:

"Hello, Lowry, old scout! Glad you're going to join us! Good stuff! This is the life!"

"Right you are!" Lowry shouted back, his manly face beaming with pleasure. To Lady Violet, who had joined him, he explained:

"That boat was in my division last year. Her skipper and I were classmates at Annapolis."

The speeding destroyer, so fragile in appearance, so audacious in action, darted across the liner's bow as a pilot fish plays around a shark. Lady Violet exclaimed, with a happy sigh of relief:

"I feel perfectly safe, Mr. Lowry! It will be such a comfort to-night to know that those brave boats of yours are protecting us out there in the darkness. But what if the weather should be rough?"

"Wait and see. The barometer is dropping. There will be wind before long. A destroyer has some extra motions of her own, but you can't drown them."

In her candid, artless manner the lovely Englishwoman asked many questions which the occasion quite naturally prompted. How were the destroyers

operated to coördinate with the British naval forces? Was there friction between the two services? Was America likely to send her big fighting ships across to join the Grand Fleet? Was it actually true that submarines were trapped in nets and that listening devices could detect the vibrations of their engines miles and miles away? Could a huge American army be transported and supplied so far from home?

Lowry was evasive or pretended ignorance. In the Bureau of Operations at Washington he had been intimately in touch with the secret plans and activities of the Allied naval organizations which guarded the Seven Seas from the English Channel to the Bay of Bengal. He had repented of his seeming rudeness earlier in the day. It was preposterous to suspect Lady Chamberlayne of any ulterior motive. In the purser's room after breakfast he had adroitly pumped that experienced man for information. Lady Violet was very well known in London society, it seemed, and a sister of a Cabinet Minister. Her war work had something to do with the families of Canadian soldiers, and her credentials were bang-up. The captain had received special instructions from the company's office to look after her during the voyage. The purser puffed a black pipe and eyed Commander Lowry with the mellowed tolerance of a philosopher. He was familiar with the symptoms. Lady Violet was the sort to bowl 'em over right and left. This fine Navy chap was sitting up and taking notice.

Before nightfall the weather turned nasty, a strong head wind with gusts of rain. Lowry tramped the

deck alone until the destroyers became shrouded in the murk. Now and then he caught glimpses of one or another, mere shadows with the white water rushing past them as they hovered close to the steamer. He well knew the risks they ran of collision, without lights to guide or warn them, and the towering bulk of the liner threatening to stamp them under. It was seamanship and pluck to thrill the heart of an old destroyer-man. Regardless of cold or fatigue, he resolved to spend the night on the bridge instead of standing merely a four-hour watch. It was his business to learn how his fellow captains of the Service played this rough-and-tumble convoy game.

He lingered a little while after dinner, hoping for a chat with Lady Violet in the library, but she was deep in conversation with a Congressman who was going to see the war for himself. Lowry felt annoyed and perplexed. The record of this particular legislator was most objectionable. He had opposed war with Germany, voted against arming American merchant ships, and denounced conscription. Personally he was blatant and crude, and Lowry had fled from his harangues in the smoking-room which betrayed an ignorance of international affairs that was almost incredible. He was something for a decent American to feel ashamed of, and yet Lady Violet was getting on with him in cordial fashion and he appeared flattered by her attention.

Lowry retreated abruptly, slamming the door as he went on deck and made his way to the navigators' bridge. The wind had increased to a gale and the liner

was plunging heavily. The destroyers were unseen, but now and again a spark of light flashed from a signal mast and was answered like a cheery "Hello, are you there?" Lowry could fancy the narrow hulls rolling wildly, half-submerged, the deck watch clinging to life-lines, a mess-boy clawing his way up an iron ladder with a pot of red-hot coffee for the officers behind the spray-swept screen.

"And we are setting a pace of nineteen knots for the poor devils," he said to himself. "In these head seas they must be smashing clean through it with no chance to ease up. Well, I'm not sorry for 'em, for they would n't swap jobs with anybody afloat."

Eleven o'clock came before he went below for a brief respite. Passing through the library, he was surprised to discover that Lady Violet Chamberlayne was still talking with the impossible Congressman whom the high-minded naval officer regarded as a shabby traitor to the flag and the cause. A sleepy steward hovered in the passageway, waiting to turn out the lights. The other voyagers had gone to their rooms. This made the prolonged interview seem confidential. Unable to fathom the situation, but more disturbed than he would have cared to admit, Commander Lowry was of the opinion that one could always learn something new about women. He mulled over it, more or less, during the long night's vigil and turned in soon after dawn.

At noon he found Lady Violet in a sheltered corner of the deck. She hailed him in passing, and at sight of her his puzzled doubts seemed to blow away with

the wind. Waving her hand at a destroyer which wallowed in a driving smother of foam, she gayly exclaimed:

"I think a lot of you, Mr. Lowry, because you wish you were out yonder! Now don't spoil it by saying something pretty to me. You would desert me like a shot if you thought you could manage a flying leap to the nearest destroyer."

"We have to get on with the war," he parried, matching her mood. "It would put me in the deuce of a dilemma —"

"Like the donkey between two bundles of hay? Seriously, I am rather proud to know a man of your sort. I very much hope you will care to look me up in London."

He thanked her, but the trace of hesitancy, the shadow on his face, betrayed his thoughts to her quick perception. Casually she remarked:

"You scowled at me last evening in the library. Was I so very shocking? This member of your Congress was most diverting. He has a wife and four children in some Western town — the name of it sounds like a settlement of red Indians — but I rather fancy he was trying to flirt with me. He asked me to dine at the Ritz."

"The State Department could n't refuse him a passport, I suppose," vehemently replied Commander Lowry, "but he is an elegant specimen to be roaming at large in France and England."

"His point of view diverted me," calmly returned Lady Violet. "He is so unspoiled, so primitive."

"About the war, for instance."

"Oh, I disagreed with him there," she sweetly insisted, "but he talked mostly about himself and his career. Middle-aged men are apt to renew the egotism of extreme youth."

"When a pretty woman encourages them to make blithering idiots of themselves," said Lowry.

"There is a rude streak in you. I am convinced of it," she returned. "And American men are reputed to be so chivalrous."

"I am sorry if honesty is to be rated as a failing, Lady Chamberlayne," was the grave retort.

She was evidently tired of the banter which had taken a turn too earnest to be agreeable. Gazing seaward again, she carelessly exclaimed:

"Your larger destroyers — the thousand-ton class — would find it easier cruising so far offshore. It must be fearfully uncomfortable in those 'flivvers.'"

Lowry stared at her, and the color surged into his cheek. She had professed a complete ignorance of naval matters and he had been more than careful to avoid the technical details of his trade. It was forbidden, and he was one to obey orders to the letter. None of the other officers on the passenger list had met her. It was not so much the information disclosed as the easy, familiar use of seafaring phrases that startled him. "Flivver" was peculiar to the jargon of the American destroyer-man as applied to the six-hundred-ton boats which had crossed to Queenstown in those early divisions. One of Lowry's own pals, yarning in a ward-room, might have used precisely

the same words which she had spoken with such off-hand assurance. It was a trifle, perhaps, but Lowry noted a subtle discord, and he had been trained during his months at a desk to be alert to the value of small things.

Lady Violet had turned quickly to face him, biting her lip as though conscious of having blundered. His grim silence was an accusation, for he was unable to dissemble his feelings. She held her head erect and her dark eyes challenged him. Obviously she was unafraid and he admired courage. Deliberately he exclaimed:

"If the 'flivvers' develop any structural weakness in this unusually heavy work, the American Navy is resourceful enough to keep them in service, I imagine."

"Small comfort for the enemy in that," said Lady Violet, with a nervous laugh. It was apparent that she had not quite recovered her wonted poise. "The motion of the ship is abominable this morning. Would you mind tucking me in a deck chair? I shall be poor company, I fear. I am a fair-weather sailor."

Lowry did not see her on deck again until the gale subsided. The liner had safely traversed the wide Atlantic, and ran the gauntlet of the U-boats lurking in the narrow Irish Sea. The faithful destroyers escorted her until she passed the lightship off the Mersey bar and then they turned to hasten to their base at Queens-town. Waiting tugs nudged the steamer into a basin among the gray docks of Liverpool and a swarm of officials climbed the gangway. They herded the passengers into the dining-saloon and bade them file to a

table one by one. Two British sergeants of the Military Police stood by, awaiting orders, while a courteous gentleman of few words examined passports and demanded other documents. His curiosity was insatiable.

Commander Lowry was permitted to pass without delay. He stepped aside and watched the performance with lively interest. The system was elaborate and it operated with uncanny smoothness. The Belgian, who had been regarded with dark suspicions on shipboard, was approved with no more than a glance at his papers. The sleepy fat man, whom the passengers had agreed was an agent of the British secret service, found himself subjected to an inquisition. His private letters were scrutinized, dozens of questions were hurled at him, other officials were called into consultation, and, at length, the two strapping sergeants whisked him away to a stateroom to be locked up and searched to the skin while other Tommies tore his luggage apart and even split the soles of his shoes.

"They seem to have his number," said Lowry to the purser.

"It's not easy to get ashore in this tight little isle unless you are strictly all right," was the reply. "That noisy Congressman will be allowed to land, but he will be kept under surveillance. His record was cabled ahead of him."

Lady Violet Chamberlayne was not even requested to appear at the table. Among those first to board the ship was an elderly man of unquestionable distinc-

tion. The deference paid him was almost obsequious. Tall and stooping, wearing his clothes with a touch of careless indifference to the fashion, the aquiline features, the manner blandly superior, stamped him as a Briton of the ruling class. He kissed Lady Violet on both cheeks, chucked her under the chin, and called her "Doodles" with the most affectionate ardor. They withdrew to a quiet corner from which she emerged to beckon Lowry who had been an observer of the fond reunion.

"My father, Lord Chamberlayne," said she, in presenting him. "Dad, this is Commander Lowry of the American Navy. He has been very kind to your wandering child."

"Delighted, I'm sure," cordially exclaimed the titled personage. "I had the pleasure of dining with your Admiral Sims last night. We like him tremendously over here. Blood is thicker than water, and all that sort of thing. Staff duty, Commander Lowry? You will be in London, I hope."

"Oh, no, indeed, Dad!" cried Lady Violet. "He is a fighting sailor. All he wants to make him happy is a destroyer."

"How sporting! Here's to a lucky cruise! Well, we must be bustling along. Will you share a compartment to London with us, Commander Lowry?"

"Thank you, sir, but my orders are for Liverpool."

Lady Violet said good-bye with a wistful shadow in her eyes and her hand seemed to linger in Lowry's clasp. Impulsively he regretted his vague, suspicious conjectures which appeared to him as wild and fan-

ciful now that the tension of the voyage was relaxed. He would have told her something to this effect, but her noble parent was already bustling her along to the wharf. Lowry was getting his luggage together when a lieutenant of his own Service boarded the ship and found him after a hasty search. Short of breath, he explained:

"I am the executive officer of the *Burnham*. This wire just came through for you from London Headquarters and I jumped in a taxi to catch you before you went ashore."

Lowry read the telegram and felt bewildered. It detached him from command of the destroyer *Burnham* and instructed him to proceed without delay to London for special duty ashore. Endeavoring to hide his distress, he thanked the lieutenant and inquired:

"Who is to take the *Burnham*? Do you know?"

"I am to have her temporarily, until the overhaul is completed."

"I hope you can take her to sea," courteously observed Lowry.

The lieutenant surmised that things had gone wrong for this senior officer, but he made no comment and punctiliously offered his taxi. They rode in silence to the railway station where Lowry took pains to avoid meeting Lady Violet and Lord Chamberlayne. This change of orders, so abrupt and undreamed-of, was a wretched anticlimax. Life had become flat and insipid. Again he saw the destroyers plunging through the darkness and the gale, playing the finest game in the world, and his one desire had been to share the labor

and the peril of their splendid adventure. And it had been snatched from his grasp. Duty was his religion, however, and he pulled himself together for the unhappy journey to London. With Lady Violet in mind he said to himself:

"She called me a fighting sailor! It would be some job to convince her that I was n't a blooming liar. Yankee swank and bluff — that is how she would size me up now. The dashing destroyer-man! More like a movie hero. Well, I wonder what put a crimp in me this time? I am barred from sea duty for some fault or other."

A lonely night in London was not calculated to brighten his low-spirited humor. Gloomy streets and wretched food, bad news from Flanders, and an unusually wicked air raid just as he was about to go to a theater combined to increase his profound distaste for staff duty in this nightmarish city. He was outwardly cheerful and undismayed next morning, however, when he reported at the mansion in Grosvenor Gardens above whose doorway the Stars and Stripes indicated the headquarters of the vice-admiral commanding the American naval forces in European waters. The chief-of-staff, a kindly, grizzled captain, said as they shook hands:

"I have n't seen you since we were shipmates on a battleship cruise. You feel disappointed, I presume, to be shifted from the *Burnham*."

"Somewhat, sir," replied Lowry, and he took it smiling.

"It was a knock-down blow, for an old destroyer-

man, but —” the captain hesitated, fingered the papers on his desk, and added, “The admiral wishes to see you personally. I wired you at his request.”

“Whew! I was afraid I had got in wrong somehow, and this confirms it!” Lowry could not help exclaiming.

“Not necessarily,” was the dry comment. “Wait a moment. I think you can go in at once.”

Lowry swallowed hard and followed an aide into a spacious room adjoining. The vice-admiral stood warming himself in front of a grate fire while he dictated letters with the brisk efficiency of a rapid-fire gun. Affable as usual, but going straight to the point, he said to his uneasy visitor:

“The British Admiralty has requested me to detail an officer for work of a highly confidential and most important nature. I sent your name this morning to Commodore Sir Douglas Hart who directs the Naval Intelligence in so far as it concerns the operations of the German submarines. You will be stationed in his office. It is not ordinary *liaison* duty as you will discover for yourself.”

“I can report at once, sir,” answered Commander Lowry, asking no questions.

“Commodore Hart expects you at noon. Your reports will come directly to me. We can protect our troop convoys and maintain an army of two million men in France. The fact is already proven. But unless the losses to other merchant tonnage can be decreased by fifty per cent, England will be starved out of the war by the end of the winter, and that means

losing the war. The blue-water problem is the vital one. Bear this in mind, Lowry. I have no instructions to give you, but I strongly advise the utmost discretion. You cannot be too careful. London fairly reeks with German espionage. The same is true of Washington, I imagine, so you have learned to watch your step."

The admiral pushed a button to recall the stenographer and Lowry comprehended that the interview was closed. Not a word of sympathy for his grievous disappointment, but that was the way of the Service. He should have felt honored, but the hurt still rankled as he set out on foot to find Whitehall and the gray old pile of buildings which housed the mighty organization of the Admiralty. When the hour of noon boomed from the great bell in the Parliament tower he had been guided through dingy, rambling corridors, up worn staircases of stone, to a room in which a bright-eyed little man was poring over a series of charts that were spread upon a table of vast dimensions. Tiny flags of various colors were stuck here and there and he was engaged in shifting them about. Lowry glanced at the broad gold stripe on his sleeve and said, mentioning his own name:

"Commodore Hart? Thank you. I am at your service, sir, by direction of the vice-admiral commanding the American forces."

"Ah, my dear Lowry — the pleasure is mine. I was informed by telephone — with a rather careful personal description. This saved sending some one with you, don't you know."

"To be sure I was myself?" smiled the commander.

"Right-o! One of the routine precautions," chirruped the sprightly commodore whose gray hair was incongruous with his boyish energy. "I was just checking up the latest reports from the Dover patrol. If you wish to see how this little game is played, we'll carry on for an hour and then go out for a bite of luncheon."

Together they studied the flag-dotted charts of the Channel, the Irish Sea, the North Atlantic, the Bay of Biscay, and the Mediterranean, and Lowry quickly comprehended that this room was the nerve-center, the focus, of the secret warfare against the enemy submarines in all its intricate and far-flung activities. Night and day, by radio and telegraph, through agencies more obscure than these, the information was received and sifted, analyzed, compared. From the results it was possible to deduce the number of U-boats at sea and to fix their areas of operation, even to trace and identify their separate voyages. The clues came in from torpedoed merchant steamers sinking as they flashed the last despairing call for help; from destroyers with their convoys far at sea; from trawlers shelled and riddled while they swept for mines; from seaplanes that winged it coastwise and huge dirigibles steering far offshore; from the fleets of submarine chasers that skimmed out from every naval base; from German sailors fished out of the sea when their U-boats were blown to bits.

The commodore laid down his dividers and rule after drawing several lines in pencil. They enclosed

a small area on the chart, with the compass bearings carefully indicated. Absorbed in the problem, he moved a flag an inch or so before turning to say to the fascinated Lowry:

"That U-boat ought to be about there. I have traced it for three days, and warnings have been sent to your Yankee troop convoys and our own vessels. Seven destroyers have started out to hunt the beggar down and I have a notion they may pot him before night."

"It is a matter of calculating his cruising speed and the positions in which he has been sighted or reported," said Lowry.

"Precisely that! It has taken time to perfect the system. This submarine nuisance caught us all with our socks down. One did n't expect such dirty warfare. But I fancy we shall be twisting the tail of Fritz from now on. Instead of sending my reports to your admiral, it is much better to work together. We are all one navy, for the present."

Lowry cordially agreed to this, and his trained mind grasped the extraordinary difficulties which the genius of this vivacious British commodore had already overcome. With an uncanny sixth sense he was able to discard a mass of misleading reports, to pounce upon those which fitted in as factors of a particular problem and to arrive at a reliable conclusion. Across the surface of his charts the courses of the prowling submarines were traced in lines which doubled or curved or twisted like the trail of a worm.

"Eleven of them are at sea to-day!" he exclaimed.

"There were fourteen yesterday morning. We had a lucky inning. One hit a mine in Dover Strait, another was scuppered eighty miles sou'west of Ushant, and your bully Queenstown destroyers accounted for the third."

"I hoped to get a whack at them myself," Lowry replied, his face clouding.

"We all feel that way, my dear chap. But perhaps you and I can give them a proper dusting right in this old shop. Here is one — this red flag marks the spot — in a jolly fix. We put him down in thirteen fathoms last night, shortly before dusk, and bombed him properly. A flock of drifters has him encircled. They heard him hammering away like mad this morning, trying to repair his engines or something of the sort. He will drown on the bottom. Odd that you can't feel sorry for the blighters, but it is like exterminating vermin."

To all intents and purposes, Commander Walter Lowry, U.S.N., had joined the British Naval Service. This he realized as he came to adjust himself, day by day, to the demands of his new task. From ten o'clock in the morning until ten at night he was in the dingy room with the commodore whose spirits never flagged. Together they guessed and pondered and made their moves upon the difficult chessboard whose stakes were incalculable. When they were wrong they invented some new method and put it to the test. Slowly but steadily the toll of destroyed U-boats was mounting and the tabulations showed that Germany was falling behind in building new ones. The tide had

turned in favor of the Allied operations and the peak had been passed.

Lowry found no time to look up old friends at the American Naval Headquarters, and his inclination was to avoid them, nor did he visit the officers' clubs and the hotels where they dined. He believed it advisable to say as little as possible about his business or to make public his connection with the Admiralty. It could be inferred that he was in London on waiting orders. He made an exception, however, in the case of an ensign who happened to be a cousin, and who lived in his own home town. Lowry felt a fatherly responsibility for the welfare of this youngster who had left college to take a three months' course at Annapolis and win a reserve commission. To his amazed delight he had been sent abroad to join the vice-admiral's staff.

A good-looking, agreeable boy, Ensign William Pratt found many social attractions in London, and Commander Lowry's steadying hand was required to keep him from going a bit wild. It was an obvious duty to tame his exuberance and try to pound into him the fact that war was a business and not a pastime. They were at dinner together in a small, old-fashioned hotel unfrequented by Americans when the older man inquired:

"Have you cut out the tea-fights and theater parties, Billy? And what about cocktails at the Carleton bar? You gave me your word, you know."

"It's all off, Walter. Absolutely nothing doing," was the prompt assurance. "I have been as dry as a

Y.M.C.A. hut ever since you read me the riot act. Besides, I am on the night trick now and a fellow has to have his wits about him every minute. The decoding officer is giving me a try-out, and I certainly aim to make good."

"You are a bright kid, which is why they shoved you into Communications," judicially observed Lowry.

"Awfully interesting work," said the ensign, his manner slightly patronizing. "Too bad you can't be doing something of the kind, instead of cooling your heels on waiting orders. I handle the real inside stuff. We cracked the latest German Admiralty code last week, but they switched on us a couple of nights later. I'll bet we crack it again, though."

"I hope so, Billy," was the bland comment of the commander who had already received this same information from expert code-breakers of the Admiralty. "Better be careful about spilling conversation. They are putting a good deal of trust in you. The decoding-room demands a tight lip."

"You don't have to tell me!" cried Ensign Pratt. "That was how I happened to get sent across — an Intelligence job in the First Naval District put me in right with my boss. And if a fellow knocks around London at all he learns to be mighty careful. I know two or three officers in our own Service who work under cover — in partnership with the British Secret Service — and some of their yarns are corking. You hear a lot of startling gossip among society people, too. I have met a bunch of charming women — they

make a fuss over a chap in an American Navy uniform. We're quite the fad just now."

Lowry smiled and listened. It amused him to let the youngster rattle on in his eager, ingenuous manner.

"I have n't a doubt that I am watched," continued Ensign Pratt, with a glance over his shoulder. The dining-room was almost empty, and he explained; "You never can tell. A man whose work is as important as mine is liable to be spotted and followed up by the enemy's system of spies. Maybe some lovely girl you meet at tea in a fashionable house is one of their agents. I've been getting the straight dope on this 'Hidden Hand' and it is enough to scare you."

"The 'Hidden Hand'?" queried Lowry, mildly incredulous. "More or less tommy-rot, is n't it, Billy?"

"Not on your life! Listen, Walter, there are powerful influences in England that don't want to see Germany licked. Get me? You run into it if you keep your eye peeled. You must have heard some of the stories. I have reason to believe they are true."

"War breeds impossible rumors and scandals," objected Lowry, with more earnestness. "The atmosphere is abnormal. People become unbalanced, neurotic, without realizing it. They swallow any lie that comes along."

"But you are not in a position to know, Walter, old man," said the ensign, and his manner was almost pitying. "A major-general of the British Army was shot for treason two days ago. And Sir Tracey Dulles, the big banker, is locked up in the Tower under sentence of death."

"Fudge, Billy! You are too easy. And Lord Kitchener is alive as a prisoner in Germany, and a Russian army was transported through England."

"This is different stuff," argued the ensign. "I am in a position to know, I tell you. Here is Lady Violet Chamberlayne, for instance. Her brother is in the Cabinet and her father is Chairman of the Board of Shipping Control. Her husband had settled a fortune on her before she divorced him and they say it is tied up in German manufacturing interests. That may have something to do with her devotion to the cause of the Kaiser."

Commander Walter Lowry sat upright in his chair and his eyes opened wide. He had ceased to appear amused. This was no longer artless prattle, to pass in at one ear and out of the other. By habit he masked his emotions, however, and he spoke evenly.

"You have met this Lady Chamberlayne, have you, Billy?"

"I should say yes. I danced with her and took her into dinner twice. By Jove, she's no chicken, but I came precious close to falling in love with her. She is a peach. A very dangerous woman, take it from me."

"How old is she?" and a twinkle relieved Lowry's stern expression.

"By Jove, she must be getting on toward thirty," replied Ensign Pratt, "but she is tremendously well preserved."

"An antique, from your point of view, eh, Billy? And so Lady Violet Chamberlayne is an agent of the 'Hidden Hand'?"

"I hate to think it, but I get my information straight from the inside. She is as clever as the deuce, and they can't get the goods on her, or she has pull enough to keep her off the rocks. If I had n't been warned she might have been twisting me around her finger by now."

"I can't quite understand how she was able to resist you, William," gravely observed Commander Lowry. "She did n't propose an elopement?"

"Now you're joshing me, Walter. You don't mix up with people, so how can you expect to get wise to what is going on?"

"Very true, my son. Being alone and adrift in London, it is a great thing to have a philosopher and friend like you."

"You will learn a few things, anyhow," confidently replied William. "I could let you in on some dope about submarine warfare that would surprise you —"

"Sorry, but we'll have to wait until next time," interrupted Lowry, glancing at his watch. "I have an engagement."

He saw the buoyant ensign depart in a taxi for the night trick at American Naval Headquarters and then sauntered into Trafalgar Square and crossed to the gloomy courtyard of the Admiralty. It was absurd to regard the ensign's gossip too seriously, but the boy was no fool, and he must have demonstrated his fitness for confidential and exacting employment or he would not be assigned to the Department of Communications. And apparently he knew important people in London. The indictment of Lady Violet was

shocking and incredible, and yet Lowry could not help recalling his uncomfortable sensations on ship-board, the suspicions which had seemed so intangible, so unreasonable. It had been no more than a series of intuitions which had been brushed from his mind when the steamer reached Liverpool.

He was compelled to put aside these perturbing reflections, for the commodore awaited him impatiently and was in one of his fidgety moods. A consultation was in progress, and Lowry stood aside until two British officers finished what they had to say and left the room. The commodore locked the door behind them and explained:

“The chief-of-staff from the Dunkirk base and the commander of the Dover drifter patrol. They agree with our conclusions. You and I are right as usual, Lowry. And that diary yonder proves it to the hilt.”

He waved a hand in the direction of the grate fire where a sea-stained, sodden little book was propped up to dry in a toasting-rack. It had been recovered from the body of a German sailor washed ashore near Penzance.

“I finished translating a page or two,” resumed the commodore. “The scoundrel jotted down the date of departure from Zeebrugge, and his submarine was destroyed on the morning following. Look at the position on the chart, if you please. This boat could not have made the long run around the north of Scotland to reach the Atlantic. Therefore he went down the Channel, through our barrage. There have been other instances lately.”

Lowry scanned the chart of Dover Strait and the Belgium coast as he commented:

"He took the short cut and saved himself a thundering lot of distance. That increases his cruising efficiency by a good many per cent, sir. As long as you compel them to go far north to get to sea —"

"The blighter poked his way through a gap in our nets and dodged our patrols!" stormed the commodore. "They have been making a habit of it lately. I realize that it is the devil's own job to keep those miles and miles of nets in position during the winter gales, with a four or five knot tide racing through Dover Strait. But it must be stopped. I am properly fed up with it. And the First Sea Lord is seriously annoyed. He dropped in to see me while you were out, and scowled at my charts."

"But you are not responsible for the Dover barrage, sir," mildly suggested Lowry. "They can't put it up to you."

"Right-o; but they are always asking one to do impossible things. This does not directly concern the American force, for you have no ships in the Strait, but the protection of shipping is as vital to you as it is to us, and so I shall expect you to set your wits at work and help me euchre those artful swine at Ostend and Zeebrugge."

Until midnight the commodore drew diagrams and sketches and tossed them in the waste-basket. The problem was to establish and maintain an effective barrier across the stormy strait between England and France. For one thing, he announced to Lowry, a

more elaborate system of nets was required, not merely defensive, but equipped with means of destruction. Instead of laying mines separately they should be a part of the net barrier, so that a submarine entangling itself should automatically blow itself to blazes. This would teach them to be wary of the route down Channel.

This was the beginning of three days and nights of racking, concentrated labor added to the regular routine. Admirals and other commodores joined the conferences and the suggestions piled up, but the guiding genius was the marvelous little man who rumpled his gray hair and swore in a genial manner and littered the floor with his plans and memoranda. At length, the undertaking was welded into final shape. It appeared to be an impassable, impenetrable combination of nets, mines, surface, and air patrols. His eyelids red for lack of sleep, the commodore slapped Lowry's shoulder and cried:

"You Yanks are planning to lay a barrier of mines across the upper end of the North Sea, from the Orkneys to the Norway coast. Now if this scheme of ours is any use and it closes the Channel exit, we've got 'em fenced in both ways."

Once more he verified the set of diagrams, the compass bearings, the instructions appended, and then sent them to the drafting-room to be copied in blueprint. Lowry congratulated him. It was a brilliant achievement and of vital importance. When the blueprints were returned, in the afternoon of the following day, the commodore initialed them and slipped

one complete set into a large Admiralty envelope which he sealed with wax.

"For your vice-admiral, with my compliments," he told Lowry. "He will be interested, I'm sure. It seems a bit better to entrust them to you than to send them along by one of our messengers."

"I will be responsible for the blue-prints, sir," Lowry assured him, carefully placing the envelope in his leather dispatch case. "I have another errand at American Headquarters and if you don't mind I'll go at once."

"Stay as long as you like, my boy. You deserve a breath of air. This shop of mine is a mad-house."

After a week of fog and rain and disconsolate gloom, the streets of London were enjoying a brief benediction of sunshine. There was something like a breath of spring in the air. Lowry was in a sight-seeing mood as he gazed at the crowds from the open window of a taxi. Presently he heard the distant rattle and boom of a drum corps and the skirl of the bagpipes. The flow of traffic slackened and finally halted to keep the cross-street clear for the passage of marching troops. Lowry's taxi waited in the blockade of trucks, motor-cars, and omnibuses, nor did he mind the slight delay. It always thrilled him to catch a glimpse of the indomitable British Army.

He leaned out of the window as the shrill war song of the pipes drew near. Then a company of kilted infantrymen swung past with that jaunty, swaggering stride that is all their own. They were Seaforth Highlanders — hard, lean men, many of them with wound

stripes on their sleeves. The metal helmets and the heavy burden of equipment indicated that they were bound for the front. There was no cheering from the pavements. Women wiped their eyes or waved their hands. Such incidents had become part of a familiar routine. The rear ranks passed from view, the pipes flung back a lilting farewell, and two tall policemen permitted the tide of vehicles to resume its motion.

Commander Lowry settled back in the taxi, holding the leather dispatch case on his lap, while the driver deftly tacked or shot ahead a few feet. Progress was checked at the next crossing, however, and Lowry looked out to discover the cause of this new entanglement. The taxi was quite close to the curb where groups of people awaited a chance to reach the other side. Among them was a woman, slender and elegant, who bestowed upon the American naval officer a bright smile of recognition. She stood no more than a yard away from him, and Lowry could do nothing else than respond to the cordial greeting of Lady Violet Chamberlayne. Courtesy was not the only motive, however, for this glimpse of his fair shipmate revived the spell of the charm which had so greatly attracted him.

Flinging open the door of the taxi, the precious dispatch case tucked under his arm, he stepped to the curb and exclaimed as their hands met:

"My good fortune! I'm so glad you have n't forgotten me. May I come to your rescue? Whither bound?"

"To a committee meeting, of course," answered Lady Violet. "And late as usual. You have forgotten

me entirely, Commander Lowry. I have felt upset about it. Is this your first leave from Queenstown and your destroyer? If so, I may forgive your neglect."

"I am not in a destroyer, just at present," awkwardly ventured Lowry. "Really, you don't know how glad I am for this sight of you."

"Then why not drop in for tea at five o'clock? I must not detain you here. The bobby is signaling your driver to come along."

"Why not let me take you to the committee meeting, Lady Chamberlayne?" suggested Lowry. "I am in no hurry."

"How sweet of you! I am dreadfully rushed to-day and it is impossible to find a taxi. I gave up trying. The address is not far from Grosvenor Gardens, so it will be almost on your route if you happen to be going to your Naval Headquarters."

Lowry regretted that the distance was not farther. To drive with Lady Violet in the pleasant intimacy of a taxi made London seem worth while. The driver was a wise old bird and his rattle-trap fairly crawled through the remainder of the journey. The gent inside would appreciate a bit of tact and reward him accordingly. For Lowry the situation was rather difficult to manage with ease, as he soon began to realize. His impulsive invitation had overlooked the fact that he was bound to offer some explanation of his presence in London and he felt unwilling to disclose the truth. Time had almost healed his wounded self-esteem as the victim of a sorry anticlimax, and it made no great difference whether or not he was a destroyer

hero in her sight, but he felt a sense of reticence, of constraint.

That he was in danger of falling in love with Lady Violet if he should let himself go was undeniable. And in his heart he believed her innocent of wrong. He had discarded the sensational revelations of Ensign William Pratt as so much rubbish. Apparently she noticed nothing amiss with him as she chatted in that candid, friendly manner which had so strongly appealed to him.

"You thought me inquisitive and meddlesome — now did n't you? — so I shall not ask you one solitary question about yourself or your Yankee Navy," she announced.

"Was I as rough as all that?" he laughed. "Conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman? Perhaps you ought to recommend a court-martial. I have been sorry for it, if that gives you any satisfaction. My story is soon told. Desk duty again — no time to play — and no hope of being a fighting sailor."

"You had a silly notion that I might think less of you on that account!" exclaimed Lady Violet. "Men are such vain, simple creatures."

"Abuse me some more. I like it," urged Lowry.

"That impressive dispatch case which you clasp so tightly in both hands, for instance," she said, teasingly. "All the men I know trot about with those leather portfolios. It gives them an air of confidential importance. And there is nothing in them half the time, I am sure."

"If the American Navy permits no pockets in an

officer's blouse, where can he stow his cigarettes, letters, and a spare handkerchief?" Lowry demanded. "A dispatch case is the handy trick."

"My father puts sandwiches in his, and he is always losing it about the house, and then he kicks up a frightful rumpus. You might think he carried the British Government about with him."

From this lighter vein the talk shifted to the war, and Lady Violet displayed a knowledge of England's problems such as could have been gained only through association with the men who guided the destinies of the nation through these dark and critical hours. Lowry listened with an interest keen and respectful. It was brought home to him more vividly than ever before that in the minds of the statesmen of England and France one question dwelt and burned continually — how long must they hang on before America could be ready to put her back into the war?

"We don't whimper, and we shall never quit," said Lady Violet as the taxi halted at her destination, "but we can't wait much longer. You will come for tea, surely? I shall expect you."

Lowry needed no persuasion. In a happier mood he drove to the mansion in Grosvenor Gardens and requested an interview with the vice-admiral. It was granted at once. Commander Lowry found the chief of the American naval forces at leisure and alone. The errand was briefly explained, to deliver personally, as suggested by Commodore Hall of the Admiralty, a set of blue-prints showing plans in detail for a new

and more efficient anti-submarine barrier system in the Strait of Dover.

"What do you think of the scheme yourself?" queried the vice-admiral as Lowry pulled a key-ring from his pocket and was about to unlock the dispatch case.

"It is excellent, I think, sir. An opening will have to be left in the war channel, of course, for merchant vessels bound north and south, but this will be guarded very much better than at present and provision is made for shifting it elsewhere whenever the U-boats discover it. The plans show the barrage as it is now, as well as the improvements contemplated, so you can compare them for yourself."

"All right, Lowry. Spread the blue-prints on the desk and pin the corners down, and we will look over them together. You can explain the process by which the thing was worked out. That is the advantage of having you in the Admiralty."

Lowry had inserted the key in the small brass lock. He lifted the leather flap and felt for the large, sealed envelope without looking inside. His fingers groped in vain. They trembled as he withdrew them. The flat case was empty. The blue-prints had vanished, and with them the daily submarine map and the type-written reports which he had folded with it. His face expressed foolish bewilderment. Again he fumbled and searched, like a man in a trance, turning the case upside down and shaking it. His forehead was damp with cold sweat. His misery was pitiful to behold.

The vice-admiral watched the tragic episode in

silence. His clean-cut visage was inscrutable. Tossing a cigarette aside, he lighted another and stood with hands clasped behind him. A nautical clock on the mantel struck eight bells. The silvery peal rang through the room with startling loudness. The vice-admiral moved quietly to the door and shot the bolt. Lowry leaned against the desk, as though all his vigor had ebbed, and his incredulous vision was still held by the empty dispatch case. It appeared to fascinate him, to bind him with a spell of dumbness. At length he coughed and found speech, but his voice was not much stronger than a whisper.

"The blue-prints are not here, sir. I have lost them."

"So I perceive," said the vice-admiral, and the accents cut like a fine steel blade. "The fact speaks for itself. Anything more to say?"

"What is there to say?" cried Lowry, with a rush of pent-up emotion. "I locked them in the case. It was never out of my sight. Commodore Hart will tell you that he sealed the envelope and saw me turn the key on it. You saw me open the case. It's a bad dream — nothing else."

"The devil of a bad one," deliberately agreed the vice-admiral. "I can't imagine one very much worse, can you? Sit down. Take that big chair. You look sick. Perhaps I can get something out of you when your brain stops whirling. Meanwhile I shall rush a message to Commodore Hart over the private wire. He should be notified."

He sat at the telephone while Lowry listened. It

was like hearing the sentence of a judge who condemned him beyond hope of pardon. The vice-admiral ceased talking, and from the receiver there came, faint and tinny like a distant phonograph, the crackling profanity of Commodore Sir Douglas Hart.

"He is firing salvos, Lowry," the vice-admiral observed with a flicker of a smile. "I advise you to steer wide of him until to-morrow."

"I am prepared to take my medicine, sir. The matter is in your hands. The Admiralty will have no further use for me."

"Presumably not. Now, Lowry, use your wits and overhaul the thing, a link at a time. You are no fool or you would not have been selected for this berth. There must be an answer to it. What happened, from the moment you left the commodore's room until you reported to me?"

"I stood at the Whitehall entrance of the Admiralty for perhaps five minutes until a porter could find a taxi. There was a blockade at a crossing, to let some troops go by — I did n't notice the name of the street — but the delay was very brief. I was just getting clear of this jam when the taxi stopped again. The fairway was crowded and I was right alongside a woman with whom I had become acquainted on board ship. I spoke to her from the window of the taxi, and she mentioned the fact that she was stranded on foot and in a hurry to get to a war committee meeting. It was almost directly on my course, and as a mere matter of courtesy I offered to drop her there."

The vice-admiral was stroking his close-cropped

gray beard and his glance was both stern and quiz-zical as he commented:

"The woman in the case? And who might she be? What do you know about her?"

"It was Lady Violet Chamberlayne," answered Lowry, flushing hotly and conscious that he was visibly disturbed.

"Lady Violet Chamberlayne?" echoed the vice-admiral. He betrayed surprise. "You invited *her* to ride in your taxi, when you were coming from the Admiralty on confidential business of unusual importance?"

"I saw no harm in it, sir. It implied no neglect or carelessness on my part. A woman of her position has a right to expect such a small courtesy. It was done as a matter of course. Even if I had paid any attention to the senseless gossip of London in war-time, there was not the slightest risk of my disclosing information. I know how to keep my mouth shut, sir, even among friends."

"I grant you that, Lowry," was the prompt reply; "but let us return to that dispatch case of yours."

"It never left my hands while Lady Chamberlayne was in the taxi, sir. I can swear to that. When I met her and stepped out to help her inside, the case was under my arm. After that I held it upon my knee. This was not a sentimental excursion, sir. There was no reason for losing my head. I did not for a moment forget the dispatch case."

"And it never left your hands, Lowry, while Lady Chamberlayne was with you?"

"That is absolutely indisputable, sir."

"Um-m. And this is the same leather portfolio in which you placed the Admiralty blue-prints? Are you certain of that?"

Lowry subjected it to a painstaking scrutiny before he answered: "I am certain. Here is my name and address written on the cloth lining. '*Commander Walter S. Lowry, American Naval Headquarters, London.*' I used a fountain pen and it spluttered. You can see the blots. And I had previously scratched my initials on the brass plate of the lock. That scar across the leather back of the case was made by a thumb-tack on one of the chart tables in the commodore's room."

"A random guess of mine which seems to lead us nowhere," blankly admitted the vice-admiral. "I believe that you are telling me the truth, and the whole truth. There must have been black magic somewhere. But you are a hard-headed, experienced officer — no novice at confidential duties. There is a flaw in your reckoning — there must be — and the problem is to puzzle it out."

"May I have your permission to aid the investigation, sir, or am I suspended from duty?" sadly inquired the commander.

"You are suspended, awaiting results," said the vice-admiral; "but I advise you to use every possible effort to find the missing factor of this infernal equation. I shall expect a daily report from you. That will be all for the present, Lowry. I shall have to prepare a formal apology to the Admiralty. A pleasant task!"

The disgraced commander saluted and withdrew from the room, and as he passed out of the building his friends of the staff remarked among themselves that the weather must have been squally. Lowry had failed to return their careless greetings, even to look at them, as he strode through the halls with head down. On the pavement he stood irresolute and glanced at his watch. He recalled his engagement for tea with Lady Violet. The first impulse was to confront her and to explain the tragic disaster which had overtaken him. Innocently or otherwise, she was implicated. The very fact that she had been with him in the taxi made it seem hopeless to extricate himself from the web of circumstances which conspired to wreck his reputation. Primitive emotions swayed him. If persuasion failed, he would threaten her. For the life of him he could discover no possible grounds for suspecting her, and yet in what other direction was he to grope for a clue?

Cooler reflection inclined him to delay an interview with her. Already, he had no doubt, the hidden machinery of the Admiralty had been set in motion to watch his movements night and day, while it was almost as certain that the organization of the American Naval Intelligence would lose not a moment in shadowing him. War was war, and the disappearance of the set of blue-prints was no ordinary mishap. It concerned the safety of the road to France for the British Army, its munitions and supplies, of the troop transports of America, of the shipping that must keep England fed.

To go straight to the house of Lady Violet Chamberlayne, to have the visit noted and reported by the agents detailed to keep him under surveillance, would be a stupid action calculated to make the situation even worse than it was. He required a respite, time to think in quietude, to test one theory after another with the same patience displayed over a submarine plotting-chart in the commodore's room. It occurred to him, in fact, to lay out on paper his route between the Admiralty and Grosvenor Gardens and so visualize that inexplicable adventure. With this in mind he climbed a 'bus and went to his hotel in Little Suffolk Street.

Dinner held no interest for him, but he ordered a tray brought up to his room and while he ate, or drank black coffee, his pencil was spoiling sheet after sheet of paper. Somewhere there was a flaw in his recollection of what had happened and he proposed to find it. A man fagged by long hours of hard and anxious work might unwittingly suffer a brief catalepsy or sudden suspension of consciousness. Lowry fancied he had read something of the sort, but the theory seemed absurd in this instance, for he had felt uncommonly fit and there were no blank spaces to fill in. The route had become familiar to him and he was able to check it up for this particular day, one street or conspicuous building after another. Because of the sunshine and the holiday spirit of the crowds he had been more observant than usual.

Witchcraft was an obsolete doctrine. It failed to satisfy the logic of a naval officer highly trained in

technical science. He clung to the conviction that he **was** overlooking some detail, a minute and obvious factor in the sequence of events. The key to the riddle must be inside the circle of his own comprehension. Late in the evening he was interrupted by the breezy entrance of his boyish cousin, Ensign William Pratt, who flung his cape and cap on the bed, dropped into a chair with the sigh of a weary man and exclaimed:

"My night off, old top! I took a chance on finding you up and about. There was a party at Murray's — nothing rough and I score a hundred per cent for conduct in any system of rating — but that is some little supper club. I was in tow of a bunch of English officers from the North Sea destroyer patrol."

"Did they say anything about the convoy that was wiped out by a raid of German cruisers, Billy? The Admiralty censor is still holding it back."

"Two of these chaps were survivors, Walter. It was a terrible mess. Six merchant steamers and three destroyers went to the bottom, shot to pieces in no time. They had n't a show. Fritz smothered 'em with his big, fast ships and then sneaked back to Heligoland for all he was worth."

"That is his game," said Lowry, anxious to avoid personal talk, but the quick-witted ensign was not so easily diverted.

"You look mighty seedy," said he. "All frazzled out! This loafing in London on waiting orders does n't seem to agree with you. And the table all mussed up with papers and diagrams and things! Far be it from

me to be disrespectful, Commander Lowry, but I suspect you are concealing something from me."

"I am awaiting orders, at present, Billy," was the truthful reply.

"Then you ought to see a doctor. You're a sick man," announced the ensign, with the frankness of his years. "You worry too much. I know how it is. I'm not sleeping well myself. This war gets on my nerves."

"You don't know what worry is," scoffed Lowry. "Still loaded with dark secrets and inside stuff, are you?"

"Oh, a few. I have a knack of getting on with people. One of my new pals is a major in the Special Police Department — Defense of the Realm and so on, very much under cover. He drifted into Murray's to-night, looking for some one. I have been able to give him a tip or two. Now and then some queer bird picks me for an easy mark and I string 'em along."

"You *are* a misleading young person, William," observed Lowry. "Anything new and interesting?"

Ensign Pratt lowered his voice as he answered: "Trouble broke loose to-night, but I got only a hint of it. Some big information has leaked and there is the deuce to pay. The major dropped a word, and I picked up another bit of it at dinner, but nothing that I could piece together. It is really no more than a hunch of mine."

"What does that mean?" queried Lowry, tense and watchful. "Your hunches are clever, at times."

"Well, do you remember what I told you about

Lady Violet Chamberlayne? You laughed at me and said it was all piffle. Listen to this. Colonel Chambers Llewellyn went to her house this evening and stayed there two hours. You know who *he* is — chief of the whole British organization for rooting out enemy activities. He seldom shows his hand or takes an active part unless something sensational is in the wind. Few of his agents even know him by sight.”

“You assume that he has placed Lady Chamberlayne under arrest or something of the sort?” said Lowry.

“Gave her the third degree and went through her papers, more likely,” answered the ensign. “She played her hand too strong. An explosion in exclusive circles is just about due.” Young William Pratt yawned and added, with less assurance; “If you can spare fifty dollars until my next pay check, Walter, it will be a tremendous favor. Buying new uniforms and the high cost of living —”

“So that is why you honored me with this call, is it?” smiled Lowry. “I am glad to finance such a bright boy, but be careful to proceed at standard speed, Billy. And look out for shoals.”

The ensign pocketed the money, accepted the advice with an air of demure respect, and took a prompt departure. Lowry sat and smoked and brooded. His perplexities had banished sleep. They were more topsy-turvy than ever. Heavy-eyed, he returned to his methodical, futile calculations and surmises, determined to run down that missing strand of the twisted skein. Dawn was filtering through the cur-

tained windows when he jumped to his feet with an air of chagrin and said aloud:

"There, by Jove! I know how the trick was done! Block-head! I ought to have fathomed it hours ago. But I insisted on starting off on the wrong tack every time, and then, of course, my conclusions were worthless. It does n't help me out of the hole — I am smashed just the same — but there is a gleam of satisfaction in knowing that I am not a hopeless idiot. And perhaps I can be of some service to the Admiralty investigation, if it is n't too late."

With this Commander Lowry lay down on the bed and slept soundly for three hours. Then he dragged himself into a cold bath, dressed with his customary care, and fortified himself with a hearty breakfast. His emotions were those of a man about to face a firing squad as he walked in the direction of the Admiralty, but his demeanor was unshaken. Without faltering he knocked at the door of the commodore's room and the familiar, chirping voice bade him enter. Lowry perceived that the vivacious little man had also passed through a hard night. His gray thatch was even more tousled than ordinary, his chin was unshaven, and he was slumped in a chair, instead of bustling about his chart tables. He glanced up to say, abruptly:

"I was about to send for you, Lowry. Glad to see you had pluck enough to come here off your own bat. Nothing to say for yourself, I presume."

"No excuses to offer, if that is what you mean, sir. I plead guilty. But unless you have been able to

fathom the method by which I was robbed of those blue-prints, possibly you may care to hear my theory. It is the only one that fits."

"Let's have it," snapped the commodore, cocking his head like a ruffled robin. "Your vice-admiral informed us that you were utterly befogged. I had considered you rather intelligent —"

Lowry held his temper and stood punctiliously at attention as he slowly explained:

"I identified the dispatch case as my own, beyond a shadow of doubt. The proofs were unmistakable — my own signature written in ink on the lining, the initials scratched on the plate of the lock, the marks of wear on the leather. But the dispatch case was *not* mine. It could not be. I was finally compelled to argue from this absurd premise."

"Absurd?" echoed the commodore, more alertly. "It sounds asinine, does n't it?"

"Not now," calmly continued Lowry. "You simply have to admit it, or you get nowhere at all. Now, I had my hands on that dispatch case all the way from the Admiralty to Grosvenor Gardens, so I honestly believed until I came to check up. And then I felt uncertain of the fact. When my taxi stopped to let a company of Seaforth Highlanders cross, I leaned out of the window, merely poked my head out, for a minute or two. And it was then that I must have let the dispatch case lie on the seat beside me. I can't positively say that I did, but I must have done so."

"Rather possible," remarked the commodore.

"And I should scarcely regard it as culpable carelessness. What then?"

"It is conceivable that a man familiar with my movements and awaiting an opportunity might have slipped up to the window opposite from me, put his arm inside, and snatched my dispatch case. It could have been done in a flash, and my back was turned, for the moment. This implies that he left in its place a precise duplicate, imitating it in every respect."

"And your delay in discovering the substitution would have given the thief a half-hour's start," suggested the commodore. "But what if he had a key that fitted your lock? Is it a plausible guess that you still possess your own dispatch case?"

"No, sir. The lock had rusted and was not easy to turn. Nobody could have opened my case and pulled out that big envelope without my detecting it."

"But how the deuce could this lightning-change artist have left in the taxi a leather portfolio that you can't swear is a different one at all?" pursued the commodore. "A bally paradox, Lowry. Can't you invent a better one than that?"

The American commander winced, and his distress was so poignant, so heart-broken, that it appeared to stir a sympathetic chord in the breast of the impulsive sea-dog of the Admiralty. With a complete change of manner, and a grin of purest delight, he darted over to shake Lowry's hand, to pat his shoulder, to shout at him:

"Splendid! You have stood the gaff nobly, my boy. I hated myself for subjecting you to such a

wretched, damnable ordeal. But there are many kinds of service in war —”

“What’s that? It’s not as bad as I thought?” gasped Lowry, his voice breaking.

“Bad?” cackled Commodore Sir Douglas Hart, and he laughed uproariously. “It is top-hole! Simply immense! That set of blue-prints left England last night in the hands of the dolt of a German spy that snatched them from you. And old Von Tirpitz will be studying them to-night and pulling his whiskers for sheer delight.”

“Am I crazy, or are you?” stammered Lowry whose head was spinning.

“I am almost clever, at times,” modestly admitted the beaming commodore. “Those elaborate plans of the Dover barrage were all dreams. Some scheme had to be devised to prevent the blackguards from getting down the Channel. And I’ll wager a new hat that we have frightened ’em away from *that* route for the next month or two. Meanwhile we shall have a breathing spell to work out a system and put it in operation.”

“Those blue-prints were nothing but camouflage?” cried Lowry, beginning to sense the humor of the situation and forgetting his own torments.

“Solely for the use and benefit of the German Admiralty,” chuckled the commodore. “The difficult end of the job was to deliver the blue-prints. We were awfully afraid the beggars might smell a rat. The men who work for them in London are a keen lot. Finally we pitched upon you, Lowry, as the unfortunate victim. It was necessary, do you see? There was a bit of

purposely careless talk, and German ears ready to pick it up. You were in the Admiralty on confidential duty. You were making daily calls at the American Naval Headquarters, always with a leather dispatch case. And at the proper moment, it was most delicately conveyed to the vigilant Hun spies that it might be worth while to attempt a raid on that dispatch case of yours. Our own agents could be trusted to impart this information in an adroit manner."

"I was followed by another taxi, then," said the wondering Lowry. "And the German burglar pulled up close when my own taxi was halted to let the troops go by: That was when he turned the trick."

"Oh, yes, you had been followed for days and days," the commodore cheerfully informed him. "The German asses could n't help seeing you pop in and out of the Admiralty."

"But you can't explain the mystery of the dispatch case," Lowry insisted.

"The substitution? Perfectly simple. Your room at the hotel was entered while you were out and when the dispatch case was in the bureau or somewhere. It was borrowed for two or three hours and then returned. The German who did this work had a first-class artisan waiting to make a facsimile, even to your autograph and the other private marks. We knew all about it, but declined to interfere for obvious reasons. They were helping the game on. And they fancied themselves so jolly intelligent and sly!"

A reaction of feeling caused Lowry's knees to cave under him and he supported himself against a window-

ledge. Resentment at having been made a dupe struggled with his profound relief and gratification. "But why could n't you let me into the plot?" he cried. "The result would have been the same."

"Ah, we had to use every possible means to assure success. It was a ticklish undertaking, can't you see? Hostile eyes were watching every step you took. Your grief and humiliation had to be genuine. We could not afford pretenses. The odds were against us, and we pulled it off."

"I am disgraced, nevertheless," sadly observed Commander Lowry. "I am convicted of losing valuable documents, and my own Service will not forgive me."

"Buck up," exhorted the commodore. "Your vice-admiral will clear your record of any stain, at the persuasion of the Admiralty. The dice were loaded against you, Lowry. You were denied a fair chance. Why, I was in the conspiracy myself. You have taken your punishment like an officer and a gentleman. And you were no dunce when it came to solving the thing. I flatter myself that your experience with me has sharpened your wits."

"Thank God for one thing!" fervently exclaimed Lowry. His back was toward the door and it opened softly as he spoke.

"And what may that be?" asked the commodore.

"That Lady Violet Chamberlayne is cleared of suspicion. I could not believe that she was n't straight."

"Thank you so much, Mr. Lowry," said a clear, sweet voice, and the American officer turned to face the serene and charming presence of Lady Violet her-

self. He colored and bowed in frank homage. Her smile was warm and friendly as she went on: "I could have no more acceptable a champion. And, oh, I felt so sorry for you last night. I could have wept."

The commodore regarded them with a sort of parental approval as he said to Lowry:

"Lady Violet is one of our most valuable agents. The Admiralty Intelligence Service has found her indispensable for certain special duties."

"One of them was to report on your fitness for this confidential employment with Commodore Hart," confessed the radiant Lady Violet. "I recommended you, after our voyage together from New York."

"She was of great assistance to Colonel Chambers Llewellyn in preparing an unimpeded exit from England for those blue-prints," put in the commodore. "They were a frightfully busy pair last night."

"I presume that you have heard some horrid rumors about me, Mr. Lowry," sighed Lady Violet. "The 'Hidden Hand,' and so on? I have been compelled to associate with some quite impossible persons."

"The Congressman on board ship?" suggested Lowry, every cloud dispelled.

"Oh, that disagreeable pro-German bounder? He was in England less than a fortnight. I saw to it that he was sent home. He was not typical, I'm sure — more of an accident."

"You and I will have to get on with our little game of hide-and-seek with the U-boats, Lowry," the commodore remarked, with a shade of impatience.

"But he wants to command a destroyer, Commodore Hart," protested Lady Violet. "It is selfish of you to insist on keeping him longer in this stupid old Admiralty."

"There is opportunity for sea duty, even in this branch of the silent service," was the reply. "If your vice-admiral is willing, Lowry, supposing you stand watches with me a bit longer. I promise you a gorgeous show of being drowned or blown up, which is what seems to please you Yankee sailor-men."

"I did n't mean that!" exclaimed Lady Violet, with every indication of alarm. "Mr. Lowry, I expect an humble apology for failing to keep your engagement for tea yesterday. May I expect you this afternoon?"

"Without fail, Lady Chamberlayne," devoutly replied the commander, and his admiration was undisguised. "I shall be delighted to beg your pardon on bended knee."

"Come, come!" cried the commodore, darting over to his chart tables. "We have to get on with the war, Lowry. A dastardly U-boat is operating close to the Fastnet, and we must have the rotter marked down before night."

THE RED SECTOR

WHEN young Howard Glennan enlisted in the Naval Reserve, he had high hopes of being sent across the water to play the great game of hunting the Hun in destroyers. He shared this eager ambition with two hundred thousand other bluejackets who tugged at the leash of discipline and duty like so many terriers. To be kept at home in a training station or condemned to the coast patrol seemed like looking through the bars of a cage.

The war had done more than reawaken the old shipyards of Spring Haven on the coast of Maine. The town which had drowsily recalled its brave memories of the seafaring of earlier generations now swarmed with fighting men in the blue and white of the Navy. They swung their hammocks in empty warehouses and drilled and scrubbed to the shrill mandates of the bugle and the boatswain's pipe. Their armed launches and power cruisers scurried seaward to chase phantom submarines and returned with wet and hungry crews. They were learning their trade against the time of need, and the spirit and traditions of the Service were quietly, swiftly moulding them anew. They themselves, their opinions and desires, were of no consequence. What the country and the Navy intended them to be and do — this was the vital factor, the one essential.

The Army and its recruiting posters had held no

charm for such a youth as Howard Glennan, who had been bred to salt water like his fathers before him, who had tried to run away to sea at the tender age of twelve and was dragged back to school a weeping mutineer. He belonged to the web-footed breed, and with the perversity which parents occasionally display, his dogmatic sire had compelled him to drudge in a grocery store and vowed to keep him there until he was twenty-one. The sea was played out, declaimed the elder Glennan, who had long ago retired from the command of a Yankee square-rigger, and he'd stand no such darned nonsense from any boy of his.

It was different, however, when the call to action came. Grizzled Captain John Glennan, still a powerful, deep-chested figure of a man, pounded his only son on the back as he shouted:

"The Navy wants my consent before you enlist, Howard? Why, blast their stupid picture, it's an insult! Why should n't I consent? Don't they know who you are? There's been Glennans of Spring Haven afloat in every war, from Caleb that had the *True American* privateer in the Revolution and scotched the Britishers' coat-tails for 'em. Go to it, son, and help blow those German outlaws to Davy Jones where they belong!"

"Thank you, Dad," smiled Howard. "What about our grocery store? Can you get along without me?"

"I may put up the shutters!" thundered the father, "and let her stay out of commission until we've licked the Huns. S'pose I'll set and twiddle my thumbs behind a counter? There'll be dozens of new

merchant ships needing officers. I guess I'd better trundle into Boston right away and write my name down. Mother won't starve, even if I do get drowned. There's a dollar or two laid by in the toe of a stocking."

In a way, the joke was on young Howard Glennan as matters turned out. Summer had passed and he was still puttering about with the coast patrol out of Spring Haven while his doughty father had sailed as first officer of a big steel cargo steamer, was torpedoed and picked up adrift off the coast of France, and had gone out again as skipper of a tanker bound to the North Sea. He wrote home that being blown up was exciting until a man got used to it. Shipmates of his that had been h'isted three or four times told him that the novelty soon wore off. Anyhow, the life agreed with him better than beating around the Horn in a wind-jammer in the dead o' winter.

Such brisk tidings filled Howard Glennan with chagrin and made him melancholy. He had assumed that his old barnacle of a dad was a back number, merely fit to look on while adventurous youth fought the war and risked its dangers. Why, at this rate a man was safer in the Navy than if he played football or drove a car. They took too good care of you, in fact — fussing about your health and your habits and how you folded your clothes and brushed your teeth and stowed your canvas bag.

When ashore he lived at the training station, which had overflowed into an old warehouse, while for sea duty he was assigned to a fifty-foot patrol boat which

bucketed among the islands off the coast and dared the open ocean in fair weather. She had been a shapely craft and the pride of her owner, but after her enrollment in the Navy he viewed her once, rubbed his eyes, then wept and turned away. The emotions of Howard Glennan were similar. He regarded a vessel with the eye of a mariner. To spoil her beauty was an act of cruelty.

This *Golden Rod*, "C.P. 178," had been hauled out on the marine railway at the Fenwick shipyard and young Glennan, able seaman, was under the bottom scraping paint with two of his comrades. Presently he crawled out, eased his cramped muscles, and gazed at the unholy transformation which had be-daubed the sides with patches of pink and blue and green in a delirious scheme of camouflage, clapped on a rough deck-house which looked like an overgrown hencoop, sawed away the polished oak rails to make clearance for a gun, and boarded up the plate-glass windows of the cabin. The *Golden Rod* might be efficient, but she was no longer elegant. Her aspect was positively dissolute.

The yard was building two four-masted schooners whose handsome hulls rose from the sloping keel-blocks which led to the river's edge. A lanky, leathery patriarch who wore a black coat and a flapping straw hat appeared to be in charge of one of them, and he now strolled over to squint at the patrol boat which squatted high and dry. With a chuckle he extended a corded hand to young Glennan and exclaimed:

"It's nigh on forty years since I begun imbibin'

three fingers of Medford rum before breakfast to keep the dampness out, and I dunno as it ever did me a mite o' harm. But I quit right now till that loony packet of yours is away and gone. For God's sake, look at her, Howard. She's an acute case of nautical tremens."

"Those gobs of paint, Cap'n Amazeen? That's to fool the enemy," seriously replied the bluejacket. "The colors blend at sea and decrease her visibility."

"So I'm told, but it's highly indecent," was the dry comment. "And what do you cal'late to do with that invisible little nightmare when she's afloat?"

"Oh, we take our turn — a three days' trip — north'ard from Pemaquid Point. The patrol areas are marked in blocks on the chart. We anchor at night and go messing around all day. It's no fun. Too stupid."

Captain Wesley Amazeen shaved a chew of tobacco and stuffed it in his wizened cheek. Age had not faded his shrewd eyes nor crippled the sinewy frame. Tough as whalebone and wicked as sin, his fellow skippers had called him, but there was whimsical tenderness in his smile as he said:

"I've watched you grow up, Howard, and your old man and me sailed together in the fo'castle when we were boys. I'm proud to see you wearin' Navy clothes. It's a he-man's job and I expect you to shove along an' win promotion."

"I'll try, sir," replied Glennan, his cheek a bit redder, his head held high. Captain Amazeen's manner had implied a veiled rebuke. "I'm an awful dub

at mathematics — solid ivory — so I've passed up working for an ensign's commission. But I hope to be a petty officer before long."

"You ought to be, Howard. There ain't a smarter coast pilot 'twixt here and the Penobscot, and you're mighty handy aboard any kind of a vessel. But you've got to put your back into it. Do all you can and then a little bit more."

"Do you mean to accuse me of sojering?" hotly demanded Glennan.

"No, but I watched you from the stagin' over yonder," calmly explained the old man, "and you wa'n't handlin' that scraper as if winnin' the war depended on how fast you cleaned the weeds off them planks. I know how you young high-steppers feel. There's no glory in stayin' at home. This Uncle Sam's Navy is n't run by a passel of fools, son. They know where they need you lads most. Better leave it to Josephus Daniels and his star-spangled admirals."

"But we may be kept on this silly coast patrol until the end of the war," protested the able seaman.

"Silly?" croaked Captain Wesley Amazeen, and his voice was confidential as he went on: "It's no more than a hunch, Howard, but it'll pay you to keep your weather eye lifted every blessed minute. Use your wits, too, and sharpen 'em regular, like honin' a razor. Your knowledge of these waters and the folks alongshore is wuth somethin'. The Regular Navy men ain't got it. Them pizen Germans is as busy as weevils in a barrel of hard-tack."

Glennan blinked at this, and his face was incred-

lous. Old Amazeen had rambled on like a man in his dotage, but he was one of the superintendents of the shipyard and renowned for handling artisans and materials to the best advantage. After a thoughtful pause, the bluejacket ventured to say:

"A hunch, sir? Then you think there is something in the wind? It never occurred to me — and I can't imagine what you are driving at."

"No more can I," grimly declared the mariner, "but they used to say I could smell trouble in the fo'castle long before it started. You are Cap'n John Glennan's boy and rated as a chip of the old block. Now forget what I said and turn to on your job. You won't blab or bungle, if I know your blood. Just remember, Howard, that Fritz is a slimy fighter and the war zone begins on this side o' the big pond."

It was an important interview for the happy-go-lucky young seaman who had been bitten by discontent. He was candid enough to admit that he deserved the kindly censure. His heart had not been in the daily task. He was not living it up to the hilt. The gospel of duty, hour by hour, had become a trifle blurred. As for Wesley Amazeen's hunch, the old man never told all he knew, and his knack of sensing the intangible was said to be uncanny.

Now when a decent young man of twenty is jarred by some bump or other, his natural impulse is to talk it over with the girl he knows best of all. If she is the right one, she offers the kind of sympathy which heals the hurts of wounded pride and inspires high resolves. Upon a sea-washed headland near Spring Haven was

a summer hotel, modern, large, and expensive, which was called the Winnebassett. In the humble rôle of a clerk in the paternal store, Howard Glennan had delivered many a wagon-load of groceries at the kitchen entrance, while in the evening he might have been seen, correctly clad and displaying excellent manners, in the company of one of the most charming guests, Miss Barbara Downes, who was socially recognized even by exclusive persons from Boston.

Her father, Franklin Downes, had made his money in copper, but there were New England sea captains among his forbears and he was fond of Spring Haven and its salty chronicles. It had been his democratic habit in previous summers to linger in Captain John Glennan's grocery store, where he swung his legs from a counter and listened to yarns of vanished ships and tarry sailors whose souls had fled to Fiddler's Green. Mrs. Franklin Downes was a placid, motherly woman whose tastes were of the simplest and whose soul was untroubled by problems of caste and position. There was no reason why they should put on airs because they were rich, said she, and too much money was an affliction anyhow. The nicest people seemed to get along with precious little of it.

There were guests at the Winnebassett who had been shocked to see Barbara Downes walking or dancing with the village grocer's son, but when such gossip reached her ears she took pains to present young Mr. Glennan to these fastidious critics as a member of an old and respected family which had won prestige for the Stars and Stripes on every sea

through six generations. The war had swept false social standards into the rubbish heap. The uniform now leveled all barriers, excepting those of Army and Navy rank. When Howard Glennan, able seaman, called at the hotel, nobody knew or cared what he had been before he enlisted. He bore himself as a gentleman and this was enough.

As soon as the giddy *Golden Rod* slid into the water from the marine railway he was granted a few hours of liberty. In his blue blouse with the rolling collar, loose kerchief very precisely knotted, flowing trousers, and cap set on three hairs, he was a proper sailor, and the naval station might have been proud of its handiwork.

The June twilight was fading when he skirted the beach and turned to climb a path which led over the rocks. Strong and tireless, he almost ran up the rough ascent to the hotel and was about to cross the lawn when his questing vision caught a glimpse of Barbara Downes, who had walked toward the outer end of the headland and the white lighthouse that crowned it. She stood adorably outlined against the sky, a figure slender and erect, and Glennan paused to gaze at what should have been a flawless picture, but, alas, it was marred for him by the intrusion of another man. He was a stranger and he knew how to make himself agreeable. This much was already obvious. Jealousy clouded the sailor's bright mood. Miss Downes was quick to read his emotions. His face was an open book and he wore his heart on his sleeve.

The other man was older, perhaps thirty, with an

air of poise and resolution, of having done things and done them well. He wore his clothes with distinction, his manner was easy and cordial, and Glennan reluctantly admitted to himself that the fellow was confoundedly good-looking. Shaking hands as the girl introduced them, he affably explained:

"I am in charge of construction work for the new training station. I hope to move you out of those old warehouses in a few weeks. It's a rush job. Nothing is too good for the Navy."

"Great news, Mr. Kline," replied Glennan. "We surely do need more room and those rough floors are awful to keep clean. The dust of a hundred years shakes down whenever a man turns over in his hammock. Are you from the Navy Department?"

"No. I wish I wore the uniform. My firm is doing some contract work for the Government. This is our first naval job."

"Mr. Kline is with Kimball and Bacon," explained Barbara Downes. "He built the power house for one of father's copper properties in Montana. This is how we happened to get acquainted to-day."

"Your first visit to Spring Haven?" politely inquired Howard Glennan. "The idea of a 'rush job' would have startled us natives a few months ago."

"A town with atmosphere, charm, a storied past," responded Mr. Guy Webber Kline. "I cruised along this coast in a friend's yacht several years ago, but we missed old Spring Haven."

They moved in the direction of the long piazza. The sailor was in a silent humor while the construc-

tion engineer talked fluently and held Miss Barbara's interest. It was something, just to sit and look at her, pensively reflected the youngster. He came out of himself and listened when Mr. Kline recalled several diverting incidents of that holiday cruise along the Maine coast.

"You must be acquainted with all the reefs and islands, Mr. Glennan," he suggested. "It's a wonder we did n't try to run over a few of them. The skipper of the yacht was one of those stubborn Norwegians who refused to take advice and did his own navigating instead of picking up a fisherman or pilot."

"You ran a chance of losing your boat," said Howard. "It's not safe to run by the charts unless you know the set of the tides and the cross-currents."

"Right you are. You don't have to tell me," agreed Mr. Kline, with a laugh. "I flattered myself that I learned something while we were blundering about. There was one mighty close shave. My knees wobbled, I'll confess, and I'm sure I turned pale. We were trying to make harbor before dark, but the fog shut down and we poked along at three or four knots, feeling our way among those rocky islands. The skipper had no idea where he was, but the old fool refused to anchor. Finally the weather lifted a bit and we saw a few stars overhead. Then a lighthouse flashed dead ahead. I'll swear it was right on top of us. Before the yacht could back off with engines reversed we rammed the steep cliff at the base of the light, smashed our bowsprit, and crumpled the cut-water like an old hat."

Howard Glennan leaned forward in the chair, his professional interest kindled.

"And your forward bulkhead held?" he asked. "There was steep water right up to the base of the cliff?"

"There must have been," answered Mr. Guy Webber Kline. "Yes, the yacht stayed afloat and we limped into port next day. It was Thorpe's Island that we rammed, as we discovered on the chart. But for the thick weather we could have seen the light ten miles away and steered to the west of the red sector. That gives you a safe passage through the channel, as I recall it."

"Thorpe's Island?" echoed Glennan, very abruptly. "And the light shows a red sector which you must keep to the west'ard of? Oh, yes, I understand, Mr. Kline. You have a good memory for a landsman. How long ago was that cruise of yours?"

"Four years. A night like that stamps itself on one's memory, don't you know. How deep is the water where we smashed full tilt into Thorpe's Island?"

"Twelve fathom close in — shoaling to seven feet in the middle of the passage where a ledge is marked by a spindle beacon with a gas buoy at the tail of it. Lucky you did n't pile up on the ledge, Mr. Kline."

A little later the engineer excused himself on the plea that a pile of blue-prints demanded his attention. Glennan bade him a cordial good-night at which Mr. Kline smiled discreetly. He was quite aware that the ingenuous sailor had thought him superfluous. Barbara Downes glanced after him and tactlessly remarked:

"Awfully pleasant, is n't he, Howard? He made a hit with father who had met him out West. That is how he happened to dine with us."

"He seems like a good sport," agreed the sailor, but without enthusiasm. "If you like him I suppose I ought to keep my mouth shut, but, by jingo, I can't —"

"What in the world!" exclaimed the girl. "How could he have offended you?"

It was the advice of Captain Wesley Amazeen that had stirred the young man to vigilant attention instead of careless disregard of what went on around him. He was a day-dreamer awakened. No trifles were insignificant. Otherwise he might have paid no heed to the blunder of which the agreeable Mr. Guy Webber Kline had been guilty. Unhesitatingly he resolved to confide in Barbara. She was a loyal comrade and he needed her counsel and partnership. It was not "blabbing" to discuss the curious episode with her. His voice betrayed excitement as he said:

"It sounds queer, but the clever engineer made a slip that lays him open to suspicion. He had no idea that he did it, and it almost got by me."

"Suspicion of what?" demanded Barbara, who had common sense as well as beauty. She inferred that jealousy had twisted the vision of this devoted admirer.

"Well, I don't know what," confessed Howard, rubbing his chin in a rueful manner. "I may be a false alarm. Now, listen, please, and swear to keep mum. You heard him call it Thorpe's Island? Do you

know where he found that name? It is on a new chart just revised by the Hydrographic Office and printed for the use of the Navy coast patrol. The chart has not been placed on sale. Copies issued to us are marked secret and confidential, because they have certain marks, bearings, and data which will be removed from the edition given out to mariners."

In breathless accents Miss Downes apologized for doubting so remarkable a young man and begged him to unwind another strand of the mystery.

"But what had Thorpe's Island to do with it, Howard? It got in the way of their yacht, which was very rude of it, but I fear I am not bright enough to follow you."

"It is called Thorpe's Island on this new naval chart, *but nowhere else*. It has always been Merry's Island to fishermen and coastwise mariners, and this is the name of it on the charts in general use."

"How perplexing!" cried Miss Downes, puckering her brows. "What is the reason for changing it to Thorpe's Island?"

"To prevent confusion and make navigation easier for naval officers unfamiliar with the coast," replied Glennan, with more confidence. "Mary Island lies only seven miles to the south'ard and it sounds too much like Merry's Island. You can imagine a Navy skipper of the coast patrol hailing a dory or a lumber schooner to get a set of bearings and having one of these names shouted back at him. He cocks an eye at the chart, finds Mary Island and Merry's Island not far apart, and may go streaking off on a totally

wrong course. Hence Thorpe's Island from now on."

"But, Howard, you are accusing Mr. Kline of stealing one of your Navy charts or of looking at it when he had n't ought to!" exclaimed the scandalized Barbara.

"He had better get busy with an alibi," affirmed the sailor. "He has no right to examine one of those charts, of course. He is not in the Service. Now can't you figure out how he made the slip? All charts may look alike to him, and it had n't occurred to him that the name of an island might have been changed. One thing more! That lighthouse did *not* show a red sector until March of this year. He said his yachting cruise was four years ago, remember?"

"And the light was changed only a few months ago? There was no red sector until then?" queried the girl.

"Surest thing you know. Mr. Guy Webber Kline cribbed that from the Navy chart, too."

"But I am quite sure he is not a stupid man, Howard. To let himself be tripped so easily by — er — by a mere boy."

"Thanks for the insult," was the dignified retort. "The trouble with that bird is that he's no sailor. I don't believe he ever cruised on this coast in anybody's yacht. The yarn did n't listen right to me. But he might have got by with it if he had n't assumed that islands and lights were the same on all charts. It was a slight bet he overlooked."

"But why did he tell you the story?" was the very natural query.

"Perhaps to coax some information out of me, a little at a time. You noticed that he asked the depth of water off Thorpe's Island. Next he may try to pump me about the tide and the bottom. Or it may have been merely to scrape acquaintance by talking my kind of stuff. I am all in the dark, Barbara, but I don't like the notion of his squinting at confidential charts. And, besides, Captain Wesley Amazeen had a hunch. Maybe this is it."

"Are you quite sure you don't dislike Mr. Kline just because — well, because — you know what I mean, don't you?" suggested Miss Downes after a deliberate pause. "I want you to be fair-minded, Howard."

"Because he got on so well with you?" cried her sturdy champion. "I'd love to punch his head for it, but that would n't be getting on with the war. No, I promise to play the game on the level. It is your war and mine, Barbara. Will you help me keep an eye on Mr. Guy Webber Kline?"

Her warm hand clasped his in token of an alliance and her voice rang strong and true as she answered:

"Your Navy and mine, Howard, and I will stand watch and watch with you."

The *Golden Rod* went to sea next morning on patrol duty. The ensign in command had won his commission in the naval militia before the war and he was a lawyer by trade, an earnest young man whom not even seasickness could daunt. Tall, thin, and dry of manner, he ruled his cockle-shell of a cruiser with the most punctilious attention to detail. His dozen blue-

jackets respected his zeal and agreed that he would make a good officer in time. In a tight pinch they felt that he would show sand and resolution and this counted greatly in his favor. Behind his back they imitated the precise bearing and awkward gestures of Ensign Ambrose J. Walters, but they jumped when he gave an order, and he, in turn, declared that there were no finer lads in the whole American Navy.

The acting navigator of the *Golden Rod* was Howard Glennan, able seaman, who could have set most of the courses with his eyes shut. When released from his trick at the wheel he curled up and slept on a transom in the deck-house, ready for a call. The other men drilled at the one popgun in the bow, polished brass, were taught to handle cutlass and rifle, and in the leisure hours Ensign Walters delivered lectures on the theory and practice of naval warfare, quoting Nelson, Farragut, and Captain Mahan. He intended that the *Golden Rod* should be ready to engage the enemy. It is doubtful whether he would have turned tail to a first-class battleship.

Many of the islands scattered far off the Maine coast are singularly remote and unfrequented, bits of wilderness marked from seaward by a few trees all twisted by the winter gales, a patch of green grass, or the flash of surf playing among gigantic boulders. It seems as though some mighty convulsion of nature must have hurled them where they lie, as fragments of a bursting shell are flung at random. Ensign Walters liked to cruise among them so long as he had a capable pilot in Seaman Glennan, for they broke the

uneasy motion of the Atlantic swell beyond and prevented those dismal qualms which imparted a tinge of green to his sandy complexion.

The wind breathed soft from the land and the sky indicated settled weather as the patrol boat dropped one island and fairway after another over her stern, and the crew cast wistful glances at the galley window from which an aroma of fish chowder was wafted. The Navy had called them from factory, farm, and college to meet the test without fear or favor. The barefooted lad who had been peeling potatoes glanced up as the *Golden Rod* slipped past a plutocratic summer place which resembled the estate of a feudal baron and casually remarked:

"There's mother and Sis waving handkerchiefs. I don't dare wig-wag back. Seems funny not to see the *Hesperus* anchored in the cove. Dad wrote that he had loaned her to the Government for a dollar a month and she's on her way to the French coast. Some sea-going boat, that. He was fitting out for a cruise around the world when this war busted loose."

"Who would n't leave a happy home for this?" grinned a stalwart comrade as he plied a deck-mop. "Say, bo, you ought to have worked pull enough to be shifted to your own yacht. Why miss a chance to beat it for the war zone?"

"Pull be hanged!" retorted the cook's helper. "My boss in the galley says I skin a spud like an artist. What more can I ask? They waste no compliments in this man's navy."

Late in the afternoon the *Golden Rod* rounded an

islet of naked granite that rose like a lonely pinnacle. Far in the distance, blurred by the smoky haze, the white shaft of a lighthouse barely lifted above the horizon. Howard Glennan gazed at it with more than passing interest and turned to scan the chart which was pinned to a table in the wheel-house. Ensign Walters squinted through his binoculars, replaced them in the rack, and said:

“Thorpe’s Island? The best run yet, Glennan. It took us forty minutes longer last trip, with the tide about the same.”

“Yes, sir. I tried that short cut through Parlin Thoroughfare. It’s safe enough if you reach it at high water.”

Glennan changed the course two points and looked at the compass card. Sighting Thorpe’s Island light had recalled the genial Mr. Guy Webber Kline and his reference to revisions of the chart which he was not presumed to know. It was too intangible to mention to Ensign Walters, who might laugh at such conjectures as rubbish. He was in a sociable humor and presently exclaimed:

“The newspapers have printed some nonsense about German wireless stations on this coast. Nothing in it, of course. They could n’t hide a plant on one of these islands.”

“Right you are, sir,” replied Glennan. “Our patrol would nail ’em in a jiffy. And the fishermen are good scouts. They would report anything that looked queer.”

“Yes, the Naval Intelligence people keep in touch

with the natives, I am quite sure. This wireless stuff is like rumors of a submarine base. All moonshine. Some bright reporter invents a yarn, or a motorboat sees a lobster buoy adrift and calls it a lurking periscope."

"It makes something to talk about, sir. The public ashore will bite at 'most anything these days. They beg for exciting dope, whether it's true or not. I'll bet I know this coast better than any German and I could n't tuck a submarine base away to save my soul."

The ensign nodded assent and spoke in his abrupt, official manner. "Slow down beyond Thorpe's Island and stand well out to get plenty of room before dark."

"Aye, sir. If you don't mind I should like to make a turn after the light is lit and run back to fix a bearing or two. This is a new chart and —"

"Anything wrong with it, Glennan? You have run past here several times and seemed sure of your courses."

"The chart is correct, sir, but we may be in a hurry one of these nights and there is another channel which I might want to use."

"Very well. We'll loaf out here this evening and then jog to the west'ard and exchange signals with the patrol boat in the next block."

The crew loafed on deck in the dusk while the little *Golden Rod* rolled with a gentle, cradling motion and showed no lights as she sheared through a placid sea. The light on Thorpe's Island flashed like a brilliant jewel, its rays as white as a diamond until Glennan

steered across their path and the color changed to ruby, the warning to mariners to beware and go clear.

"The red sector," said Glennan to himself. "Now I am going to follow the edge of it inshore as far as I dare and then out to sea until it dims."

His motive was scarcely more than a sailor's instinct. The purpose of a shore light was to indicate direction and position. He was curious to find out for himself just how accurately Thorpe's Island light might be used to locate a particular point on the chart. Cross-bearings would be required, of course, so as the *Golden Rod* moved along the edge of the red sector, Seaman Howard Glennan kept a sharp lookout for other lights which might serve to form an angle and a line of intersection. He discovered two of these, one well inshore, a fixed light at the entrance to Clam-Shell Gut, and another ten miles out to seaward — the faint twinkle of the revolving lenses that marked the Sow and Pigs.

Ensign Ambrose Walters, who had been somewhat unhappy since supper because the deck insisted on heaving up and down, spoke rudely to his acting navigator.

"What do you think this is — a cake-walk? Are you going to promenade up and down that red sector all night?"

"All done, sir," cheerily answered the sailor. "I'll know that light next time I see it."

At the end of his watch, Glennan penciled two tiny crosses on the chart to mark the cross-bearings. With the parallel ruler he obtained the exact compass bear-

ings of the intersecting ranges and jotted them on a scrap of paper which he tucked in his blouse. If any one should wish to make unlawful use of Thorpe's Island light or the waters thereabouts, there was one able seaman of the Naval Reserve who hoped to discover the how and why of it. He thought Captain Wesley Amazeen would approve. At any rate, he was paying attention to trifles and keeping his weather eye lifted.

Three days later the *Golden Rod* returned to Spring Haven, and her lively young bluejackets were glad to scamper ashore and be rid of their cramped quarters for a brief respite. Howard Glennan went to the training station on the wharf and changed his clothes before falling in for drill. On the water-front near by was the site of an old shipyard whose buildings were tottering in decay. The place was astir again, gangs of laborers tearing down the sheds and shops, others digging foundation trenches, while the railroad spur was filled with cars loaded with lumber, cement, and machinery.

The man in authority was Mr. Guy Webber Kline who seemed to be a man of his word. He was making a "rush job" of the new barracks for the Naval Reserve, but it was haste without confusion or waste motion. Clad in white flannel, cool and debonair, he halted to talk to a foreman who answered with a smile, or solved the troubles of another group which had been delayed by a balky hoisting engine. He had the knack of keeping a dozen tasks under way without bluster.

"I'll have to hand it to him," murmured Glennan. "He delivers the goods, and I ought to be ashamed of myself for suspecting him of anything crooked."

Like one who steers his course by a star, the able seaman betook himself straight to the Winnebassett Hotel when the day's work was done. The Downes family had motored to Spruce Inlet for a shore dinner, he was informed, and expected to return during the evening. This was forlorn news for a young man whose hours of leave were golden, but he concluded to wait, having fortified himself with supper at the bare, scrubbed table of the training station. An open fire beckoned him into one of the small parlors where he found an armchair and a magazine or two. Having lost sleep aboard the *Golden Rod*, he was drowsily comfortable when Mr. Guy Webber Kline sauntered in, hailed him with genial courtesy, and drew up a chair.

"I saw your boat come in," said the engineer. "Your skipper, Ambrose Walters, is an acquaintance of mine. We met in Chicago last winter — at the University Club. I can't quite picture him as a sea-dog."

"Mr. Walters will learn," said Howard. "You can't expect to find enough sailors to man our Navy. The supply is too small."

"But chaps of your sort ought to be trained as officers, Glennan. If I can do anything — a word in the right quarter sometimes helps. I know a lot of people in Washington."

Howard flushed and his voice was emphatic as he exclaimed:

"Thanks, but I'd rather go ahead under my own steam. I don't care to be towed. I can wait until Mr. Walters recommends me for promotion."

"The proper spirit," said the engineer, and he changed the subject. "I shall turn in rather early to-night. It's tiresome — this getting a job under way with the labor supply all shot to pieces."

"I thought you were hustling things along in great shape, Mr. Kline, when I reached port to-day."

"Oh, we started something. I hoped to enjoy this coast — run about a bit in my car — but I am lashed to the mast. I'm afraid I won't be able to break out of Spring Haven at all. I have seen absolutely nothing but the road between the hotel and the town."

Glennan said something about the quaint coast-wise villages which tourists found so attractive and then the conversation slackened. The glowing logs in the wide fireplace wrought their magic spell. It was pleasant to stare at them in contented silence. Suddenly Howard Glennan's reveries were disturbed by something which caused him to sit erect, smother a yawn, and steal an alert glance at the abstracted Mr. Kline. Then the nose of young Glennan sniffed, very cautiously. His sense of smell had been trained at sea and there were certain odors so familiar that he could identify them anywhere.

This aroma was so faint, so elusive, that he sniffed again. Then he rose from his chair to poke the fire and brushed Mr. Guy Webber Kline in passing. This amiable gentleman yawned, remarked that he had almost dropped off asleep, and bade his young friend

adieu for the night. Glennan lingered in the parlor a little while and then tramped the windy piazza until an automobile drew up and the Downes family disembarked. The shore dinner had been a bit too much for mother whose appetite sometimes outran her discretion. She announced that her husband was to find the hot-water bottle and tuck her in bed as soon as the Lord would let him. The loving daughter offered aid and sympathy, but was firmly repulsed. Therefore she joined the able seaman, who piloted her to a quiet corner where the lights were not too glaring.

"You poor boy," said she with a caressing intonation which made his fond heart flutter. "Waiting alone while I frivoleed with broiled lobster and steamed clams. Had I but known! And I am simply crazy to hear all about everything. Has the 'hunch' come true? I have n't discovered a solitary thing excepting a lonesome feeling when the *Golden Rod* goes to sea."

"I call that very important," returned Howard. "The first time you have noticed it, too. Has the Kline person been playing around with you?"

"Now and then. He does n't seem to dislike me. But he has been very much tied up with his work. He comes up the hill about six o'clock and goes to his room soon after dinner."

"He told me that he had been nowhere else," the young man reflected aloud.

"I am quite sure of it!" exclaimed Barbara Downes. "Last evening, I know, two of his foremen came up for a consultation. I was in the office when the clerk sent them up to his room."

The sailor smiled enjoyably. With the air of a conspirator he whispered in the girl's ear:

"He went out last night, when he was supposed to be in bed, and drove his car forty miles."

Barbara gasped. Her eyes sparkled and she clutched Glennan's sleeve as she implored:

"Tell me, quick! But you were off in the *Golden Rod*. Who saw him leave the hotel?"

"Nobody, so far as I know. But I am ready to swear that he made a trip to Snell's Landing."

"But, Howard, there is nothing at Snell's Landing except the wharf and the sardine factory."

"Mr. Guy Webber Kline was in the sardine factory, Barbara, and he must have stayed some time. Do you know what that smell is? It does n't stick to you if you just walk through the place. But linger an hour or two and, whew! you surely do carry it away with you. My sister worked at Snell's Landing one summer when she was home from school, and when she visited us over Sunday — honestly, soap and water could n't cure it entirely."

"And are you positive that Mr. Kline was flavored like a sardine? Did you meet him to-night?" giggled Barbara. "He is so extremely natty and particular."

"It was just a suggestion of a flavor," explained Glennan. "I did n't get it until after he threw away his cigar. We were in the little parlor with the doors shut. He took a bath and changed his clothes, no doubt, but the factory fragrance got in his hair. That is what it did to my sister, although she kept her head

tied up while she was at work. I don't suppose that Mr. Kline noticed it himself."

Miss Downes gravely cogitated, her chin in her hand. The situation was fascinating. They must follow the trail of the sardine no matter where it led them. She had promised to stand watch and watch with Seaman Howard Glennan, U.S.N.R.

"I verily believe you have scented a clue," she declared. "If he sneaked off to Snell's Landing last night, perhaps he will do it again. But you have to go back to the training station. How can I spy on him all by myself? He is very clever, you know."

"I have a nifty little scheme," he replied. "Come with me, child, and I will show you."

He led the way to the hotel garage which was screened in a grove of hemlock behind the hotel. The doors were open and a round-shouldered native in rubber boots was washing Mr. Franklin Downes's big touring car. Barbara halted to pick up a coat which had been left in the tonneau and said to Howard:

"That is Mr. Kline's roadster — behind the post. He has invited me to go out with him, if he ever finds the time."

The man with the hose looked up and grumbled:

"He's derved fussy about that bus of his — locks the switch and keeps the key himself. Afraid I'll swipe it for a joy-ride, hey?"

"That is unjust — to suspect a man with such an honest face as yours," sweetly observed Miss Downes. "So Mr. Kline is quite certain that nobody else uses his car?"

Glennan strolled over to the roadster and quickly read the row of figures which indicated the total mileage on the speedometer dial. This was all he cared to know. It was the purpose of his visit to the garage. While they were returning to the hotel he said to Barbara:

"Let me write it down for you — four-seven-three-six. When you come downstairs in the morning — and please make it as early as you can — just run out to the garage and take a slant at the mileage. If it reads forty miles higher, then you will know that Mr. Guy Webber Kline has been joy-riding himself, and Snell's Landing is the one best bet."

"And shall I telephone you, Howard, in guarded language?" asked the girl, endeavoring to be calm and collected. "Can't we devise some kind of a code?"

"No, it won't do to sound mysterious when you call up the naval station. Merely tell me that it was a fine night for a ride if you find that there was something doing."

"And if I actually discover the evidence, can I see you to-morrow to discuss what we shall do next?"

"Of course. I shall be on street patrol duty in the afternoon," answered the bluejacket. "Twirling a club and seeing that my brother gobs mind their manners. If you should happen to drift along India Street about four o'clock we might exchange a few greetings and salutations."

"And you will be running no risk of punishment for neglect of duty, Howard?"

"I should be shirking my first duty if I neglected you," he said with a twinkle.

A bugle sounded clear and plaintive from the warehouses down beside the river and the able seaman sprinted away at top speed, waving his cap as he turned to find the path which descended to the beach. To be logged for overstaying his liberty would subject him to a severe lecture from Miss Barbara Downes who was even more of a martinet than Ensign Ambrose Walters.

At seven o'clock next morning a yeoman bawled Glennan's name from the executive's office and curtly informed him that a dame wanted him on the 'phone. Once was all right, but he must n't make a habit of it. Save the chatter until you could spill it into her ear direct, advised the conscientious yeoman. Glennan turned crimson, was jeered by the ribald comrades of his own division, and hastened to close the door of the booth behind him.

"Good-morning, Mr. Glennan," spoke the darling accents of Miss Downes, who seemed to be laboring under a stress of excitement. "It — it was a perfectly splendid night for motoring. I drove forty-one and three tenths miles. What's that? Yes, he did — I mean — I did, of course, and will you be on India Street at four o'clock, surely? I have an inspiration — simply gorgeous! Good-bye."

Glennan retreated from the booth, mopped his brow, and almost jumped out of his canvas gaiters when the yeoman growled at a stripling recruit who stood rigidly at attention beside the desk:

"*Sardines*, you poor simp. *Sardines*. Get me? This order calls for six cases of 'em, and you lugged four boxes of pickled tongues aboard the ship. Can't you read?"

Recovering from this nervous shock, Glennan was about to report for general inspection when a friend offered him a copy of the *Spring Haven Beacon* with the latest news of the war. There was a lull on the fighting fronts and no reports of naval activity in the war zone, so he turned to the local items. Hastily running his eye down the columns he came to this paragraph which caused him to halt in his tracks and forget the inspecting officer:

NEW YORK CAPITAL ACQUIRES COAST FISHERIES

A Maine charter has been granted to a million-dollar corporation which will do business under the name of "The Eastern Fisheries Company." It is proposed to combine several of the sardiné canning factories under one management in order to install more efficient methods and to shift labor as it may be needed. For the last two seasons the sardine plants of the Maine coast have earned scanty profits and at least two of them have been shut down indefinitely. It is probable that the supply of Norwegian and French sardines will be cut off during the war and the prices of the domestic product will sharply advance. The factory at Snell's Landing has started up under the new management with a fair run of fish reported. New York money and enterprise are behind this company which deserves every success.

Howard Glennan's first conclusion was that Mr. Guy Webber Kline had been called into consultation

by the new management. Perhaps they intended rebuilding the cannery at Snell's Landing or erecting a better plant. This was plausible, and yet it seemed to have a flaw. The construction engineer would not be making these trips in the dead of night nor would he cover his tracks by lying about it. He had declared that his work in Spring Haven prevented him from leaving town in any direction, even to motor along the shore. And he had driven his roadster forty miles on two successive nights. In Howard Glennan's opinion the behavior of Mr. Guy Webber Kline was by no means as clear as sunlight.

It was a long, long day until four o'clock when Glennan stood at a corner of India Street, swinging his short truncheon and paying little heed to the Spring Haven girls who passed in winsome procession. They appeared to have errands of importance, and it was noteworthy that the streets near the waterfront had become amazingly popular with the arrival of the spruce young bluejackets of the coast patrol and the training station.

Miss Barbara Downes was so very different from all other girls, of course, that Glennan espied her as soon as she rounded a bend of the ancient thoroughfare. Fearful of interfering with his duty, she approached with some trepidation. When on patrol he suggested to her law and order and court-martials and what-not. He might be capable even of placing her under arrest. His beaming face was reassuring, however, and he wheeled to walk abreast of her. There was a quieter stretch beyond, where India

Street opened into a square, and she waited until this refuge was gained before she exclaimed:

"Howard Glennan, I have made up my mind, and you must not try to argue me out of it! Have you seen the morning paper? I have an intuition that that Mr. Kline and the new owners of the sardine factory at Snell's Landing are hatching something."

"That sounds like Cap'n Wesley Amazeen," laughed the sailor. "You can smell trouble before it happens."

"So can you," she retorted, with an air of pride. "That is precisely what you did in the little parlor at the hotel. Now, you are tied hand and foot by the Navy routine and you will have to go to sea in the *Golden Rod*. Our suspicions are too flimsy to be reported to your officers. You and I must manage this affair between us, somehow, and I have determined to apply for a position in that sardine factory."

Glennan's dismay made him speechless, but a Navy man should be quick to act in any emergency, and he rallied to say, with masterful authority:

"You will do nothing of the kind, Miss Downes. Your fond parents would n't stand for it. And I am very sure that I won't."

The voice of Barbara was no less resolute as she replied:

"I shall say nothing to the fond but interfering parents. A school friend of mine, Mary Betts, has a cottage on an island near Snell's Landing. She has been begging me to visit her. In war one has to resort to strategy."

"But a sardine factory is no place for you," persisted the young man; "and there's the risk of being caught at it by this Guy Webber Kline or his pals."

"If your sister could do it, I guess I can survive. And Mr. Kline will not come in the daytime. It is quite heroic of me, for the idea of — of suggesting a sardine — of having my hair perfumed with it, is positively frightful."

"Well, it's not a permanent affliction and a shampoo helps some," consoled Glennan. "I can't compel obedience, but for Heaven's sake forget it. Let me talk it over with you — whew! here comes Ensign Ambrose Walters. I'm very sorry, but you had better beat it. He is fussy at times."

Miss Downes departed hastily as if threatened by the iron hand of naval discipline. The tall ensign halted as the able seaman smartly saluted and a smile was on the serious visage as he dryly remarked:

"The ladies lose their way, I presume, Glennan, and stop to inquire the name of the street. If they annoy you I'll detail a bodyguard."

"Yes, sir. Thank you," soberly replied the sailor. "They can't help showing a friendly spirit in a man's own town."

"Um-m, sorry to tear you away from the social whirl, but the ship is ordered to sea to-night. The *Mermaid* has broken down and we shall have to make her trip as an extra run. Report aboard at seven o'clock."

"Aye, sir. That means a week at sea."

"Something like it. I shall take a smaller crew than usual so as to give us more elbow-room."

This cruise of the *Golden Rod* turned out to be singularly uneventful, and she was homeward bound, five days later, when Ensign Walters was pained to discover that a leak in the gasoline tank had flooded the bilges and threatened to blow his fearless man-of-war to kingdom come. The inflammable stuff was pumped overside with gingerly caution and the machinist's mate managed to find and plug the hole where the tank had rusted. There was an unexpected shortage of fuel, however, and no port convenient for taking on a supply. The commander scowled at the chart and said to the man at the wheel:

"We can't possibly fetch Spring Haven, and these islands hereabouts are not likely to have fuel to sell by the barrel. It means a straight run for the coast and the nearest town."

"There is Jonesboro, but we can't get into the wharf at low water, sir," suggested Howard Glennan. His heart beat faster as he glanced at the chart and added: "Snell's Landing is only six miles farther than Jonesboro and you are sure to find plenty of gas. A tank barge will come alongside and connect a hose."

"Make it Snell's Landing, then, and cut the corners, before the motors lie down and die."

The *Golden Rod* kicked along at ten knots with no disquieting symptoms until she was nearing the last point of land beyond which lay the snug harbor of Snell's Landing. Then the speed slackened, there was a series of hectic "pop-pops" in the engine-room, and

the machinist's mate poked his head through the hatch to announce that she'd sucked up the last drop of juice and nobody ought to expect her to run without it. Mr. Walters rubbed his nose, swore in a subdued, dignified manner, and told the boatswain's mate to let go the anchor. It was obvious that a boat could be lowered and sent in to Snell's Landing to bring back enough gasoline in cans to carry the vessel thither. This the ensign promptly decided to do, and Howard Glennan was so eager to be selected as one of the boat's crew that he was fairly under foot. After colliding with him twice, Mr. Walters snorted:

"Gangway there, or I'll tie a fender around your neck! Jump in and take an oar. You have been in the port before and know your way about."

The boatswain's mate went in charge. He was a relic of the old Navy, ruddy and bald and fat, too near the retiring age to be sent overseas, but a useful man for training young recruits. It was his duty, said he, to put the fear of God in 'em, and cure 'em of the sufferin' delusion that they knew it all. To be condemned to such a bathtub as the *Golden Rod* — he, Mike Fessenden, who had cruised around the globe in a battle-wagon — was galling to the soul, but he endured it for the glory and honor of the Service. He was fond of young Glennan because he was a sailor born, not one of those ready-made gobs from the corn belt who did n't know a serving-mallet from a martingale.

Grumbling at the ragged oarsmanship, old Mike steered the boat clear of the surf on the point and

rounded a red buoy. The harbor disclosed itself as a basin almost rimmed by rocky slopes, a tidal pool sheltered from the sea with a channel deep and narrow winding to the weedy wharves. Fishing sloops and power dories jostled each other or were hauled out on the strip of white beach in front of a few small dwellings, gray, low-roofed, and wind-blown. From the village, a mile inland, the white spire of a New England meeting-house lifted austere against the sky.

Built out over the water was the sardine cannery, a long shed with many open windows. Moored beside the pier at the outer end of the shed were two small steamers, stanch vessels with a bold sheer, the brown nets neatly piled on deck. They had come in with cargoes of fish, for the big dippers were scooping them out of the holds and dumping them into the cars at the cannery door.

The Navy boat's crew pulled over to the anchored hulk of a schooner which displayed a signboard, "Gasoline," and left the cans to be filled. Mike Fessenden was reminded that the cook had besought him to find some fresh haddock for supper, and perhaps there was a drop of cider ashore which it was not unlawful to sell to a man in uniform. Therefore the boat moved toward the nearest wharf, where it was left in charge of a freckled apprentice seaman whom Mike heartily disliked and never favored if it could be helped.

"I will have a squint at the sardine shop, for I have never investigated one of 'em meself," observed the

boatswain's mate. "'Tis a crime to torment an honest man with the smell of 'em, for they belong with a plate of cheese, a loaf of rye bread, and a dozen bottles of cold beer — 'specially the beer."

Howard Glennan joined him while the others explored the beach. The canning shed was clean and airy, but richly flavored. The rows of machines were tended by women who filled and sealed the cans with magical speed and dexterity. They seemed to flow in shining torrents to the bins in which they were stacked, labeled, and boxed. These ingenious processes had no interest, however, for a trim young able seaman, who had descried at a table in one of the aisles a slender, energetic girl wearing a white cap and a long oilcloth apron. Glennan hesitated to disclose his presence to Barbara Downes, yet he was tremendously anxious to learn the story of her courageous adventure. It was Mike Fessenden who decided the matter. Mistaking the lad's motive for hanging back, he hoarsely whispered:

"Bashful, is it? I'm ashamed of you. Come along now. We will give 'em a treat. Nice girls they are and good-lookers amongst 'em. How tender they are to the little fishes boiled in oil. Pipe the black-eyed one — I saw you takin' a slant at her just now — the girl by the fifth window countin' from this end. A flower she is, and what an elegant air she has. I will ask her how the sardines do be feelin' to-day."

"Oh, forget it, Mike. We must be getting back to the boat," earnestly objected the seaman.

The amiable argument attracted attention. The

sight of the Navy uniform was thrilling. The girls clapped their hands and waved handkerchiefs. Barbara Downes turned from her table, saw Glennan in the doorway, and her lovely color glowed more vivid as a recognition signal. She would have resumed her task, but just then the factory whistle blew, the hum of machinery ceased, and the girls were given breathing spell until the next run of fish should come from the cooking kettles. Gallant old Mike Fessenden lost not a moment, and was rattling off compliments to half a dozen girls who flocked to find the breeze on the wharf.

Barbara Downes slipped out alone, through a side door, and sought the road which rambled off inland. Howard Glennan ran to overtake her while the boat-swain's mate, a man of vast experience, sagely shook his head and concluded that these young people should be left to themselves for a minute or so. He himself would seek those fresh haddock for supper and so acquire merit with the ship's cook.

"Well, I disobeyed your orders, Howard!" cried Barbara Downes, with such a happy sigh of relief at this glimpse of her friend and partner. "And I don't mind the work at all. Where is the *Golden Rod* and what are you doing here?"

"The frigate is in the offing and I'm ashore on an errand," he explained. "Great luck! Sure your game is safe, are you? I have lost a lot of sleep worrying about you."

"I can fancy you tossing in your hammock, Howard — for about six minutes after you turn in — a strong man's anguish, and all that. Please don't pile

it on. I presume I must talk in a hurry or you will be stranded ashore as a deserter. Oh, I don't know where to begin."

"Then you have been finding out a few things?"

"Guessing, mostly. This sardine factory has a new manager, and he is a German, I am quite positive, although his name is Boardman. He urges the girls to buy Liberty bonds and is violently loyal, to hear him tell it, but there is a trace of an accent, a suggestion in his manner. I spent a year in Leipsic and perhaps I am more sensitive to such impressions."

"I believe you," said Glennan. "And have you been able to watch Kline at all?"

"I stole out at night, twice, and rowed in a skiff, very quietly, to the factory pier. Mr. Kline came once, for I saw a car in the lane by the little beach, but I did n't dare go ashore."

"And he met this Boardman swine, of course?"

"I think so, Howard. I saw two men go aboard one of the sardine steamers. They may have belonged to the crew, but it was after midnight and perhaps Mr. Kline was one of them. There is something else, but I am so afraid you will be rash and get in trouble —"

"That's what the Navy is for — to hunt trouble," was the logical statement of Seaman Glennan.

"But this is rather personal," declared Barbara, with some reluctance. "The captain of the larger sardine boat is an impossible person. We all dislike him. He is a Dane, I believe, or so he says. His vanity is absurd — no woman can resist him and all that — and he has been annoying the girls in the factory."

"Has he bothered you?" fiercely demanded her champion.

"Not seriously, but he has said some silly things to me, and hangs about and stares. And he insisted on walking with me once or twice, but now I wait for some of the other girls. It does no good to complain to the manager. They are on intimate terms."

"What does he look like?" inquired Glennan in tones meant to be calm.

"He is a big, bullying man with a reddish mustache and a deep voice. He walks with a swagger, and glowers at his men. They seem to be in terror of him. His name is Captain Axel Johnson. None of the natives seem to know much about him."

"Another bad egg in the basket!" cried Glennan. "Honestly, Barbara, this is no place for you. Chuck it and go back to Spring Haven, won't you? You have done enough. I'll have this precious outfit watched."

She was gazing, not at him, but at the road toward the village, and her eyes were startled and a little frightened. Glennan turned and saw approaching a burly figure which he assumed to be the truculent Captain Axel Johnson of the sardine boat. Barbara laid a hand upon her young sailor's sleeve as though to warn and restrain him. With florid gallantry the Danish mariner swept his hat from his head as he said:

"Ah, the beautiful Miss Downes! Good-afternoon, and a fair slant of weather for me because I have the pleasure of escorting you to the boarding-house."

Glennan was ignored. He seemed boyish and slight

beside this big-boned, hard-fisted seafarer, but he instantly cleared for action. The odds had never daunted a Glennan. Stepping briskly between the girl and Captain Axel Johnson, he confronted the latter as he exclaimed:

“Miss Downes is with me and you are a nuisance to both of us, you lubberly square-head! And you are to keep clear from now on, understand?”

The Dane laughed with a tolerant good-humor that was insulting beyond words. He had been drinking. The evidence was unmistakable. Gripping Glennan's shoulder with a hard, hairy hand, he thrust him to one side and said:

“Because he wears Navy clothes, the boy talks big words, eh, Miss Downes? He must not meddle with a man's business. I will have to learn him. Nobody starts arguments with Captain Axel Johnson.”

This declaration was unwarranted by the facts, for he had undoubtedly started something. Young Glennan may not have forgotten those lectures on the theory and practice of naval strategy as delivered by Ensign Ambrose Walters. At any rate, he was quick to size up the situation. He was no pugilist to whip a man far outmatching him in weight, strength, and fighting experience, and he sensibly foresaw a hopeless encounter, but he had no intention of letting this domineering brute go unpunished. Against an enemy with a heavier broadside, the trick was to board him if possible.

A quick glance and the angry bluejacket spied a three-foot bit of scantling by the roadside. He leaped

for it like a cat and was dancing back while Captain Axel Johnson still laughed at him. The contemptuous grin faded swiftly. It gave way to a look of consternation as Glennan swung his bludgeon. There was no chance to parry or dodge. The scantling smote the swaggering mariner just above the right ear and the sound was like the crack of a pistol. He sat down abruptly, a hand to his head, and the blood began to trickle through his fingers. The scantling flew into several pieces, but Glennan had no more need of it.

Poor Barbara Downes wrung her hands and wailed, but not in sympathy for the fallen bully:

“Oh, Howard, what if you have fractured his skull and killed him? Will they hang you to the yard-arm?”

“Crack that head? It’s solid bone above the ears!” very cheerily answered Howard Glennan. “Nothing but a belaying pin could dent it. Now if the beautiful Miss Downes will permit me to escort her, we’ll get under way. Farewell, Captain Axel Johnson. Big words are unhealthy for you. Better cut ’em out.”

The terrible Dane still sat in the road and glared with a dazed expression. It was to be inferred that his wits had been considerably scrambled. He was tenderly caressing the welt above the right ear which, no doubt, seemed to have the dimensions of a coconut. It was Seaman Howard Glennan who now walked with a bit of a swagger and he had offered his arm to the lovely creature at his side. There came to their ears the shrill, petulant summons of a boatswain’s pipe, and the dauntless bluejacket exclaimed, in something like dismay:

"Good gracious, that's old Mike Fessenden and I've kept the boat waiting!"

"Then there is one man in the world whom you are afraid of?" was Barbara's flattering comment.

"Surest thing you know. He will skin me alive. But I can't leave you here, Barbara, and you are not to work another day in the sardine dump."

"Because of Captain Axel Johnson, Howard?"

"Precisely. He is the sort of dog that will try to get square. Are you really staying in a village boarding-house?"

"Yes, for a few days, so as to stand watch and watch with you, as I promised. But I can go out to the island to-night and stay with my friend Mary Betts. And you don't have to worry another minute about me, for the Betts launch is at Snell's Landing right now. I saw it come into the harbor. Leave me at the wharf as we go by and I will jump into the launch."

"Fine and dandy," replied Glennan as they hastened to the beach. "And there will be something doing to-night. The *Golden Rod* is handy, and I have decided to put the proposition up to Mr. Walters, my commanding officer."

"It does n't look as flimsy as it did, Howard?" she queried anxiously. "Do you really think I have been of service?"

"You have discovered that this bunch of outlaws needs serious attention," declared he. "And the Navy is due to draw cards."

Their parting was accelerated by the stentorian

voice of old Mike Fessenden who had returned to his boat. He conveyed the impression to the harbor-side that young Glennan was a loafing swab who should be strung up by the thumbs. To Barbara Downes this fat tyrant of a boatswain's mate seemed almost as formidable as Captain Axel Johnson, and she feared that Howard had jumped from the frying-pan into the fire, but he carelessly assured her that Mike's bark was worse than his bite and he was a bully old barnacle. She was safely aboard the launch a moment later, and Glennan saw it shove off before the *Golden Rod's* boat had passed beyond the point.

He found Ensign Walters fidgeting on deck and anxious to get the ship under way, but after a brief interview the commander invited the able seaman into his cabin and bolted the door. They talked at length and the *Golden Rod* still rode at anchor. The legal mind of the ensign was accustomed to weigh evidence with a shrewd and cautious deliberation, but in this instance he was also a fighting sailor. Glennan's story won his respectful attention. He interrupted to say:

"This Guy Webber Kline is a smooth bird and I doubt if we can implicate him. That is n't really our business. The Department of Justice will attend to his case. But this lot of thugs at Snell's Landing — well, I think we had better send an armed boat ashore to-night."

"To reconnoiter, sir?" eagerly exclaimed Glennan. "The *Golden Rod* can hide behind one of the islands. She need not run in at all. We have gasoline enough

to run to Jonesboro this afternoon and fill the tanks. Then we can loaf back this way after dark."

"The idea, precisely. Did you hit this Captain Axel Johnson hard enough to put him out of commission? Will he be on the job to-night, do you think?"

"Yes, sir. I jolted him some, but if there's business on hand he will be on deck. The scantling busted when it landed on his bean, but I did n't have time to look for anything solider to soak him with."

"You seemed to have behaved with skill and promptness in the face of a superior force," replied the ensign, with his dry smile. "Was there anything to indicate that his steamer might proceed to sea to-night?"

"She has had a four days' lay in port, sir, and the sardine works need more fish. One of the boys in our boat scraped acquaintance with the engineer who told him they put all the coal and stores aboard."

"And your opinion is that this hard nut of a Danish skipper and the cannery manager, Boardman, are taking orders from Guy Webber Kline?"

"All tarred with the same brush, sir. Axel Johnson a Dane? Not much. I'll bet a month's pay that he hails from over the Rhine."

"The bet sounds good to me," said Ensign Walters. "I shall take charge of the landing party to-night and leave the ship with the boatswain's mate. You had better go along with me as a guide."

"We can go ashore at the point," suggested Glenan, "and leave the boat there. I know the path through the pines. If Kline comes for a conference he

will turn up around midnight. They will meet him in the factory or aboard Axel Johnson's steamer."

"Probably. We had better arrive too soon than too late. I shall call the boat away at ten o'clock."

Unseen from Snell's Landing, the *Golden Rod* presently moved down the coast at easy speed and slipped into the small bay at Jonesboro. Ensign Walters strolled ashore and found the telephone operator on duty in the local exchange. In response to his courteous instructions that zealously loyal young woman assured him that no messages indicating the movements of the *Golden Rod* would be allowed to go through to Snell's Landing or Spring Haven. When he returned to his dashing man-of-war, Mike Fessenden was ready to cast off and stand out to sea.

Besides the ensign and Howard Glennan, there were four seamen in the boat which stole shoreward at ten o'clock. The night was quite dark with an overcast sky and a light breeze. The *Golden Rod* was ordered to lie close to the nearest island until midnight, with all lights screened, and then return to the point. In the event of trouble ashore, a red rocket would be the landing party's signal for reinforcements and the vessel would then make for the harbor. You may be sure that all these fine young sailors were thrilled with honest delight when cutlasses and pistols were actually served out.

Glennan led the boat's crew over the boulders and along the gloomy path which climbed the hills to Snell's Landing. They went warily, but no precautions had been taken against such a visit as this. From

the slope which overlooked the tidal basin they saw no lights in the fishermen's cottages by the strip of beach and the long cannery shed and wharf were black and silent. In one of the sardine steamers, however, the cabin windows glimmered and a lantern glowed on deck like a firefly. Ensign Walters sent two of his men to patrol the village road, and bade the others follow him. Near the cannery two more were detached to watch the exits from the building and the wharf. The ensign took Glennan with him and they fetched a stealthy circuit in search of Mr. Guy Webber Kline's roadster. So far as they were able to discover, he had not arrived.

"The only way to get out to the end of the wharf is through the cannery shed," announced Glennan, after vanishing for a brief tour. "And the building is locked up to-night. Breaking into it will make the dickens of a racket. The steamer that is all lit up is Cap'n Axel Johnson's. She is in the outside berth. And they are getting steam on her. See the sparks whirling out of her funnel?"

"You can swim, I presume? How's the tide?" suggested the plucky ensign.

"High water, and there's fifteen feet at the outer end of the wharf. I can swim like a duck, but the water is some cold."

"I am no Annette Kellerman, but I guess I can make it, Glennan. Any way to climb up after we get there?"

"A ladder. That's all right. And we can stow ourselves behind that pile of sardine cases, within a few

feet of the steamer. You are a good sport, Mr. Walters."

"I am pleased to hear you say so," gravely answered the ensign as he removed his blouse. "Such an adventure as this is genuinely entertaining."

They kicked off their shoes, stuck the automatic pistols in their trousers pockets, and waded into the water which lapped the beach beside the long shed. The teeth of Ensign Walters were chattering violently as he advanced, for his physique might have been called skinny, but there was no hesitation. Keeping close to the pilings of the wharf so that they were safely screened from above, they felt the water deepen until it was necessary to swim or paddle with infinite pains in order to avoid splashing. Groping from one slippery timber or splintered plank to the next, Glennan served as pilot until his fingers clutched the ladder which led upward to the wharf. He hauled himself out and lent a hand to the ensign, who was almost benumbed and exhausted. He had never tried to swim as far in his life. The judgment of the *Golden Rod's* crew concerning Mr. Ambrose J. Walters was correct. He would stand the gaff.

Undiscovered, these amphibious pilgrims doubled themselves behind the stuff heaped on the wharf and shivered, but not with fear. They tried to interpret the sounds which came from the lighted steamer. The crew was awake and moving about. Glennan nudged the ensign at recognizing the heavy voice of Captain Axel Johnson, who was in a surly temper. He cursed a man and threatened to knock him down. In the

midst of his oaths he let slip a foreign phrase or two, and Mr. Walters whispered:

“How careless! That language was made in Germany.”

Glennan chuckled and raised his head to look at the steamer which was only a few yards distant. The darkness obscured him. A lantern moved on the fore-deck, casting a shadowy circle of illumination. It revealed the black square of an open hatch and a swinging derrick boom. The captain was bending over the hatch, giving orders to men at work in the hold below. Glennan stiffened like a pointer dog. That derrick boom had been rigged since afternoon. It was designed to handle some kind of heavy cargo, not for the regular business of a sardine boat.

A man came out of the cannery shed and swung himself aboard the steamer. He was a stranger to Glennan, but looked unlike a mariner or fisherman and might have been the manager, Boardman. The captain greeted him with a certain deference and they presently went into the cabin. The fore-deck was deserted for the moment, and Ensign Walters was about to sneak aboard on the chance of eavesdropping, but Glennan detained him.

“Steady as you are, if you please, sir. I thought I heard the hum of a motor — coming from the village. It may be Kline. Will it do any harm to wait a little?”

“Right you are. This is big stuff, and I don’t want to queer it.”

“I think I am getting wise to their game, sir. Never mind. I’ll explain later.”

The wind had freshened from the land, but it failed to bring the sound of a motor, and it seemed likely that Guy Webber Kline had left his car at some distance from the harbor. The two seamen who patrolled the road had been told to remain unseen and to permit any stranger to pass, if he were bound toward the landing. Let him enter the trap and then spring it. Time dragged interminably while the dripping adventurers crouched in their hiding-place and awaited the turn of events. At length a figure flitted rapidly from the shed and descended to the steamer with light-footed agility. Without pausing he crossed the deck and entered the cabin. One glimpse was enough to identify the dapper, capable engineer who was so absorbed in construction work that he could not possibly leave Spring Haven.

Ensign Walters was elated, but perplexed. It was essential that he should get information of the secret conference which he felt certain was a criminal conspiracy of some sort, but his first notion of concealing himself aboard the steamer seemed unwise. The risk of detection was too great. To bungle was to spoil the show. He could return ashore or send Glennan to summon the other men and rush the steamer in the hope of finding documents or other evidence in the cabin. This would be a high-handed procedure for a naval officer, and unless he could prove his case the consequences might be serious.

While he wrestled with the problem, the lantern was picked up from the steamer's fore-deck and disappeared down the open hatch. Young Glennan,

quick-witted and reckless, perceived an opportunity. It might offer a way out of the dilemma.

"You and I can't raid the party, sir," he murmured. "The whole crew would pile on us. They're rough-necks, every man of 'em. Let me take a look into that hold. They can't see me from below."

The ensign nodded assent. He had found Glennan level-headed for his years, and this was his personally conducted affair, in a way. The youngster dodged from behind the barrier of boxes and chain cable and wriggled over the string-piece of the wharf. Wrapping an arm around the steamer's jack-staff, he slid to the deck and his bare feet pattered to the coaming of the hatch. Safely shrouded in gloom, he peered down into what should have been an empty hold. There was cargo in it, however, and two lanterns shed light enough for Glennan to conclude that Captain Axel Johnson's steamer was not solely interested in sardines. He suppressed an exclamation and fled for the wharf no more than an instant before the cabin door opened and the three men came out of it. They moved forward to the open hatch, gazed into it, and the captain ordered his sailors out of the hold. The cover was clapped on and bolted down, after which Mr. Guy Webber Kline glanced over several papers, appeared to check-mark them with a pencil, replaced them in an envelope, and returned it to Captain Axel Johnson. There was a ceremonious hand-shake during which both of them bowed stiffly from the waist, and Mr. Kline said in guarded tones:

“Good luck to you, Captain. *Auf wiedersehn*. A quick voyage and plenty of sardines, eh?”

Ensign Walters was no longer perplexed. He told Glennan to make for the shore and endeavor to reach the two seamen guarding the road before Kline was held up by them. They were to let him pass unmolested, and then make for the path to their own boat at the double-quick.

“The Government may wish to give Kline some more rope,” he rapidly explained, “and I don’t propose to gum the cards. There is more to it than this one sardine factory, unless I guess wrong.”

“And we look after this steamer,” hopefully replied Glennan. “If I mix it up with that bucko skipper I’ll hit him with something hard.”

Expeditionously the ensign followed to round up his men and put them aboard the *Golden Rod* in all possible haste. He had very little to say, but the feeling was strong that this tame night’s work might have a livelier finish. They raced along the dusky path and tumbled over the boulders and were short of breath when they laid hold of the gunwales and dragged the boat down the shingle into the gentle surf. The oars jumped into the thole-pins and five sturdy backs surged into it as the keel floated clear. The ensign was unwilling to show a signal rocket, although he feared the *Golden Rod* might fail to find him. And he was desperately anxious to be heading seaward before the sardine steamer moved out of the harbor. Mike Fessenden was a vigilant ship-keeper, however, and as the boat’s crew paused to listen they heard the muffled

beat of the *Golden Rod's* motors off to port as she moved on the appointed course between the island and the coastwise point. The ensign showed him one flash from a pocket light and the patrol vessel swung over to pick up her boat.

Glennan darted into the wheel-house and studied the chart. Success or failure hung upon his skill and judgment as a navigator and pilot. It was to be a blind game of hide-and-seek. The tide had turned at the flood and he could take the *Golden Rod* through the short cut of Parlin Thoroughfare by feeling his way. This would avoid following the steamer out in the main channel and so diminish the chance of detection.

"But how do we know he intends to go out past Thorpe's Island light?" demanded Ensign Walters. "He may turn to the north'ard and then you lose him. I should say to stick to his trail."

"And let him hear us coming, sir? If he knows he is watched it's all off with any of his queer tricks. He will drift along and put his nets out and give us the laugh."

"Well, it is your dope," reasonably admitted the commander. "And I guess you will have to go to it. But if you draw a blank and it's all a false alarm, I shall give you particular and unqualified shades."

The *Golden Rod* withdrew in a coy and shrinking manner from the fairway between the islands and drifted silently until the running lights of the sardine boat came into view outside the harbor. She was a

powerfully engined craft and apparently had no time to waste on this trip. Snoring along at a good twelve knots, she swung to pick up the range lights for the easterly course and the open sea. Glennan's mind was easier. There was no danger of losing her if he went through Parlin Thoroughfare. Deftly he steered for the entrance while Ensign Walters evolved strategy and tactics. He had sailed with fewer men than usual, and if it came to close quarters his crew would be outnumbered at least two to one. However, this was a trifling detail. In his favor was the spirit and discipline of the United States Navy, not to mention the popgun mounted in the bow. It was his shrewd conjecture that the ship's company of Captain Axel Johnson had been selected for something else than their experience in harvesting sardines.

An hour later this impetuous little dreadnought emerged from the short cut without knocking her bottom out or stranding high and dry. Glennan would have thought it lunacy to attempt the passage at night, but now he had to get on with the war and if a man expected to play it safe he had better stay ashore. Again the *Golden Rod* stopped her motors and drifted with the ebbing tide. Soon the steamer's lights passed a mile away and she was bound out by Thorpe's Island, beyond any doubt.

Now the patrol boat was compelled to follow, but no lights betrayed her position. The wind favored her, for it was almost ahead and the muffled beat of the exhaust was carried astern. For two hours the chase continued and the sardine boat was drawing steadily

away until her masthead light was no more than a faint spark.

"I'll find her again," Glennan confidently assured Ensign Walters. "If she slows up later, we don't want to run too close. She may douse her lights at any time, sir."

"And then it's a needle in a haystack," grumbled the other.

Glennan glanced at the compass and then at the sets of cross-bearings which he had marked in pencil on the chart. He thought he knew where to find the sardine boat in case she eluded him. Thorpe's Island light gleamed like a star, ten miles to seaward, when Captain Axel Johnson's steamer became suddenly invisible. The masthead lamp had been extinguished. The vessel was utterly blotted out in the night.

"That settles it!" cried Glennan. "Now we know what she is."

"Very suspicious," agreed the ensign. "I am justified in firing a shot across her bows and boarding her for examination."

"We'll catch her in the act, sir, if you approve. I want to steer inshore, close to Thorpe's Island, until we pick up the red sector."

"Ah, ha — and then work out along the edge of it," cried the ensign, with unwonted excitement. "I get you, my boy! Very stupid of me for scolding you last trip when you were rehearsing this nautical cake-walk. But I did n't understand, of course."

The *Golden Rod* went her own way, regardless of

her quarry. Slowly she crept toward Thorpe's Island until the brilliant light shifted and the paths of white and ruby radiance were sharply defined. Then the patrol boat turned and carefully advanced with no more than steerage-way, noiseless, invisible. Mile after mile she moved in this manner and passed the first set of cross-bearings without sighting the steamer. Glennan's faith was unshaken. He would find the vessel at the other intersection, where the red sector crossed the light from the revolving lenses of the Sow and Pigs.

The crew of the patrol boat comprehended that young Glennan was not groping at random on this darkened sea. They were taut and ready for whatever might befall, and for the first time they vividly realized that the war zone began on their side of the Atlantic. Far out from the islands the *Golden Rod* moved like a shadow, until the light on Thorpe's Island had dropped almost to the horizon and the red sector was fading. Then she halted to listen. There was no sound of a steamer's engines, but faint and clear came the musical creak of ropes running through blocks. Glennan leaned from the wheel-house window and said to Ensign Walters:

"A derrick boom, sir, unless a schooner is trimming sheets dead ahead."

"Hold her as she is, then. If it is a derrick boom, Captain Axel Johnson is hoisting something out of the for'ard hold."

The gun crew went to stations in the bow of the *Golden Rod*. Again they heard the whine of sheaves in

their pulley blocks, and then the splash of some large and weighty object.

“Caught with the goods!” cried the ensign. “You win, Glennan. Full speed ahead and all hands stand by to board. If they resist, treat ’em rough, boys.”

The *Golden Rod* churned a foaming wake as she shot forward, regardless of the roaring song of the motors. Presently the shape of a vessel loomed vague and black no more than a few hundred feet distant. Ensign Walters switched on the searchlight and the sardine boat was revealed in brilliant detail, picked out against the curtain of night like a motion picture on a screen. Some of her men were grouped around the forward hatch and the rigging of the derrick boom dangled above their heads. The burly figure of Captain Axel Johnson was conspicuous. Two other men were in a skiff which floated a short distance from the steamer. In the stern-sheets were several bits of wood painted white with coils of line attached, such as are used to buoy lobster-pots.

For an instant all activity ceased. Bedazzled and amazed, this crew was bound by a spell. It was broken by a bellowing uproar from Captain Axel Johnson, who leaped for his wheel-house and jerked the bell-pull to signal the engine-room. The jingling alarum carried to the *Golden Rod* whose commander was aware that the steamer was about to forge ahead. Her bow was aimed straight for the fragile patrol boat as it happened, and the tall prow, steel-shod and ponderous, was gathering a menacing momentum.

“By God, he means to run us down!” said Ensign

Ambrose Walters, quite unemotionally. "Left rudder, Glennan, and half-speed. I shall have to call his bluff, the big counterfeit."

The steamer also veered, not to pass clear, but to meet the maneuver and compel a collision. It appeared to be her skipper's intention to drown the patrol boat with all hands as a desperate hope of escape. In the glare of their own searchlight he could see the bluejackets poised at the gun in the bow. There was no mistaking the *Golden Rod* for a merchant vessel.

"Slow her down!" yelled Ensign Walters, "and make fast when she bumps! Then follow me!"

He was unwilling to rake the steamer with shell at point-blank range. It was too much like murder, and he had yet to prove that this was an enemy vessel engaged in outlawed traffic. He would offer a chance of surrender. His plan was to come up alongside, which would have been feasible if the steamer had remained motionless or even fled from him. But she was lunging straight at him and the lanky ensign was in no temper to dodge and run. Young Glennan needed no more advice. As a helmsman he was pitting his nerve and skill against the bogus Dane, who, it was fair to surmise, had a severe headache.

The two vessels met in a glancing impact which shook the *Golden Rod* as though she had rammed a cliff. The steamer's bow thrust her aside and then they swung locked together, for the ensign was over the bulwark in a flash and the bight of line in his fist was tossed over the hawser bitts. At his heels was old

Mike Fessenden with a dory anchor as a grapple. The *Golden Rod* had listed as the water gushed in through her dented and broken plates. The machinist's mate scrambled up to join the boarding party, announcing that the tin warship was filling like a basket and in his opinion she was out of luck.

This was a matter of trifling importance. History had taught Ensign Ambrose J. Walters that if your vessel was sunk under you, the trick was to capture one from the enemy and transfer your flag. There was nothing to suggest a rising young lawyer as he pranced into the thick of the steamer's crew with his bluejackets massed behind him. They were fighting with fists and clubs, in honest Anglo-Saxon fashion, until Captain Axel Johnson wrenched free of the mass and emptied an automatic pistol into the struggling groups. It was a sort of berserker rage, for he wounded one of his own men besides two bluejackets who staggered to a cleared space to stanch the blood.

Ensign Walters could see no reason for gentle measures. He forbade his men to shoot, but he hammered his way nearer the bloodthirsty skipper and deliberately put a bullet through his shoulder. The courage of Captain Axel Johnson was not of the stubbornly heroic kind. The ensign was standing over him, declaring that he would kill him unless he threw up his hands. Sullenly the bully dropped his own pistol and became a non-combatant. Several of his men were of tougher metal, and they fought tenaciously, but the boarding party held together like a

well-drilled football team and shoved ahead foot by foot.

Driven against the forward deck-house, the rough-necks were compelled to scatter and then their cause was lost. Mike Fessenden wielded a short length of lead pipe with a loop in one end, and for a fat man bowed down with years he inflicted an amazing amount of damage. It was he who suggested kicking the enemy into the open hatch as fast as they weakened, which procedure disposed of the prisoners with methodical promptitude. Having cleared the decks after a series of bruising tussles, the crew of the *Golden Rod* took stock of its wounds and bruises. Painful, but not serious, was the verdict of Ensign Walters, who now found time to look for the *Golden Rod*. The indomitable patrol boat had vanished from the surface of the sea.

"An excellent finish," observed the ensign. "I shall be court-martialed for losing her, but this has been a gorgeous night."

He then swung a lantern into the forward hatch to inspect his bag of prisoners, excepting Captain Axel Johnson, who had been locked in his own cabin with the steamer's cook as nurse and surgeon. The ensign surveyed them with evident pleasure and earnestly damned them for dirty traitors who had sold their souls for wages. What interested him even more was the sight of several great steel drums or barrels of at least three hundred gallons capacity. They were up-ended in a row and chocked with plank to prevent sliding in a sea-way.

"Ah, gentlemen of the jury," chortled Ensign Walters, "the evidence is in your hands. The Navy rests its case. Crude oil — fuel for submarines — and, let me see — they had already hoisted out two drums of it and sunk them to the bottom. Glennan, ahoy! Come a-running. This is deucedly clever. Buying control of Maine sardine factories in order to use the steamers for their hellish purpose. If you had n't been such a bright young Johnny-on-the-spot, this game might have been carried on for months."

"I had a partner, sir" — and Glennan blushed in the dark. "She — that is to say — my partner did most of it."

"Do you mind introducing me? I should consider it a distinguished honor. By the way, how much water is there where the sardine boat was dropping the oil drums overboard?"

"Not more than forty feet, sir. It is on the Little John Bank. A diver can explore the bottom easily enough and make fast to those drums."

"By Jove, we forgot those two pirates in the skiff, with the bunch of lobster-pot buoys. They were marking the spot, eh?"

"Of course, sir. A German submarine could run in at night and pick up her ranges by the lights, and then find the lobster buoys at daylight. Then she could submerge until the next night, sit on the bottom, and come up to put a diver over and let him make fast to the drums and hook them up."

"We had better put after that skiff," observed the ensign. "Does a boat of this sort carry a searchlight?"

“Usually, for setting and hauling nets on clear nights if the fish are running close at hand.”

“Then it’s up to the machinist’s mate to get way on this captured cruiser.”

They picked up the skiff and the two disconsolate pirates after a brief hunt. Under threat of punishment they admitted having set two buoys at which Ensign Walters became so jubilant as to impair his dignity. He had only to wait for daybreak, make certain that the spot was accurately designated, and then steam for Spring Haven with his booty and his captives. A report to the rear admiral commanding the naval district and the chapter would be handsomely finished. Mr. Walters was a bit uncertain in his mind whether he would be praised or censured, but he unselfishly rejoiced that his acting navigator, Able Seaman Howard Glennan, was bound to acquire merit and reward.

“The admiral may be annoyed to find that the *Golden Rod* is stricken off the active list,” he said to himself, “but it has always been esteemed a difficult task to make an omelet without breaking eggs.”

Two days later the admiral himself was in a gunboat at anchor on Little John Bank, with the tall shaft of Thorpe’s Island light lifting like a slender wand against the sky-line. Guided by the white bits of wood which floated as buoys and seemed to mark the presence of innocent lobster-pots, a Navy diver prowled on the sandy bottom until he was able to slip a sling around a great steel drum. When this was hoisted aboard the gunboat, he made fast to another

drum, and the Navy gained, without further cost, six hundred gallons of fuel oil.

No more than a week had passed when Ensign Ambrose J. Walters received formal notification that he had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant, junior grade. It was hinted unofficially that he might expect a larger vessel later in the year.

Seaman Glennan was at the training station in Spring Haven when the admiral came to inspect the construction work of the new buildings. Mr. Guy Webber Kline was not there to receive him. Another engineer had replaced him. Glennan wondered at this and vainly sought information. It remained a mystery until the admiral sent for this young able seaman and eyed him quizzically from beneath heavy, gray brows. Glennan was rather appalled to face such a great man, but he stood at attention and held his chin up.

"If you had one wish, what would it be?" inquired the admiral, with a fatherly smile.

"Overseas duty in anything that floats," rapped out the youth.

"Granted. You are letting me off easy. A destroyer preferred?"

"Yes, sir. I dream of it. That is all in the world I want."

"Perhaps you had better go as a petty officer. Could you stand as much happiness as that?"

"Well, I think I can carry it without busting, sir. I am a thousand times obliged and —"

"The obligation is quite the other way, Glennan.

You are very curious to know something about Kline — the man you suspected because he was flavored like a sardine. The firm which employed him was misled and deceived. They are wholly guiltless. Ahem — Mr. Kline is safely taken care of. He has been removed beyond the jurisdiction of the Navy. Perhaps it is well to ask no more questions about that fishy gentleman.”

When Glennan climbed the headland to say goodbye to Barbara Downes before he sailed for Queens-town in a newly commissioned destroyer, he had something vastly important to tell her, but lacked the courage to say it. There was provocation enough when she exclaimed, as they met:

“Is this the end of the partnership, Howard? I thought we did awfully well at it.”

“That is a wide, wet ocean to put between us,” he dolefully returned.

“And I thought destroyer-men were so audacious!” she murmured, as though thinking aloud.

“I’m not broken in yet,” was the lame excuse. He was conscious of his wretched cowardice.

Miss Barbara Downes regarded him intently for a moment, laughed, and suggested:

“Will you please come into the little parlor with me — the room where you waited with Mr. Kline?”

He followed meekly and was tongue-tied until they were in front of the fireplace and the door was closed. Then Barbara commanded, with profound earnestness:

“Tell me the truth, Howard Glennan, and don’t

you dare fib. Sniff my hair and see if you find any trace of the flavor of sardines."

Dutifully he bent over her and her face was turned up to his. Her dusky hair held its own fragrance and he was about to declare as much, but instead of that he kissed her on the lips. It was inevitable, unavoidable, and required no explanation.

"*There !*" said Barbara Downes, "I am glad to see you realize, Petty Officer Glennan, that the Navy expects every man to do his duty."

THE END

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